CHAPTER 8

The political correspondence of Albuquerque and Cortés

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> Qué importa que el entendimiento se adelante si el corazón se queda?
>
> Baltasar Gracián

Political correspondence reveals the agency of different powers, the purposes and positions of the agents involved in different levels of political administration, the type of relationship established between them (close or distant, intimate or professional, symmetrical or hierarchical) and the tension between role-playing and the writer's real feelings. While chronicles provide a superficial sequence of so-called major events, political correspondence discloses decision-making processes where forms of persuasion, creation of trust, definition of priorities, expectations and demands are all at stake. Sometimes, the culture of specific political organisations can be better defined through the analysis of correspondence, where forms of action, jurisdictional limits and hierarchical control are all inscribed.

Comparing the correspondence of Albuquerque and Cortés to their respective kings reveals much about the European political atmosphere in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, during the process of expansion undertaken by both main Iberian powers, Portugal and Castile. In fact, both sets of letters already define the main issues involved in the foundation and development of the two empires. Albuquerque and Cortés offer two invaluably rich case studies, because they not only acted as conquerors but also reflected on the political issues resulting from their actions. Cortés fought for political legitimacy, Albuquerque for political support. But they shared a common inheritance, even if they belonged to different traditions of expansion and dealt with

different realities in the field. The initial phase of European expansion cannot be treated as a peripheral and compartmentalised area of early modern history, but must be brought into the centre of historiography because it shaped Europe more than nationalistic academic divisions recognise. Our focus is not on the history of American or Asian people affected by European expansion, but on European history, and more specifically on correspondence as a major tool of European cultural exchange.

Between 1510 and 1515, Albuquerque conquered Goa (a main port on India's west coast), Malacca (the key port of south-eastern Asia, controlling the passage from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean) and Hormuz (an island which dominated the maritime trade of the Persian Gulf) for the Portuguese crown, thereby establishing the basic network which structured the Portuguese Empire in Asia for over a century.[1] In 1521, Cortés conquered the Aztec 'empire', enlarging the area dominated by the Spaniards in Central and North America in the following years. He established a pattern of dominion over local populations and territories that lasted several centuries, even if the modes and forms of control were soon changed through the crown's decisive intervention.[2]

The founders of these Iberian empires were acting in the same conjuncture, even if Albuquerque preceded his counterpart by more than a decade, a fact that corresponds to the generational gap between them. They had totally different social backgrounds and political training. Albuquerque belonged to the high nobility of Portugal: his great-grandfather had been head secretary to King João I (1385–1433), and his grandfather and father had held the most senior positions in the royal court. Afonso de Albuquerque himself was born around 1460 in Alhandra, in the province of Lisbon and raised in the household of King Afonso V (1438–81) as a companion to Prince John (future King João II, 1481–95). He belonged to the prince's personal guard and fought with him in Castile at the battle of Toro (1476). He later

[1] Albuquerque has few biographers. See the useful but uncritical synthesis by Geneviève Bouchon, *Albuquerque: le lion des mers d'Asie* (Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 1992).

[2] For a very accurate biography, see José Luis Martínez, *Hernán Cortés* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990).

participated in the naval expedition to relieve Otranto from a Turkish siege (1480), and served the king in the captaincies of North Africa, participating in the constant fighting against local Muslim powers. In 1503, King Manuel (1495–1521) sent Albuquerque to India for the first time as captain of a small fleet of three ships. In 1506, he returned to India as captain of five ships, with the official mission of reconnoitring the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and the secret mission of succeeding the first governor of India, Francisco de Almeida, appointed in 1505 for a three-year term. Albuquerque never returned to Portugal, dying in 1515.

In contrast, Cortés was born into minor nobility around 1485 in Medellín, near Badajoz, in the province of Extremadura; his father was probably a squire. He had no real attachments to the royal court – a cousin and royal official, Francisco Núñes, agreed to become his legal representative to the emperor – and was trained as a notary in Salamanca or Valladolid. Cortés's first post in Hispaniola, after arriving with an expedition under its new governor Nicolás de Ovando in 1505, was as notary of the new city of Azúa, where he obtained a house and land. In 1511, he accompanied Diego Velázquez, entrusted by Admiral Diego Colón with the conquest and government of Cuba, maintaining his function as notary in the new city of Santiago, where he was twice nominated *alcalde* (military governor). Nobody could have predicted that Charles V would one day appoint him governor and captain-general of New Spain, or that he would be elevated to the high nobility of Spain under the title of Marquis del Valle de Oaxaca. In 1547, Cortés died in Castilleja de la Cuesta, near Seville, leaving a huge patrimony in Mexico.

POLITICAL SUPPORT

The correspondence between Afonso de Albuquerque and King Manuel was intense.[3] There are 116 extant letters from Albuquerque,

[3] Bulhão Pato and Henrique Lopes de Mendonça (eds.), *Cartas de Affonso de Albuquerque, seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, 7 vols. (Lisbon: Academia Real das Sciencias, 1884–1935).

written between 1507 and 1515; nearly all are in complete form, with just three summaries. Three letters were written in 1507, nine in 1510, fifteen in 1512, twenty-seven in 1513, fifty-seven in 1514, and three in 1515; two have no date. Understandably, Albuquerque's correspondence increased significantly after assuming governmental power in October 1509, and there is an obvious lack of some correspondence from previous years, when Albuquerque was fighting to assert his authority over the first viceroy who refused to leave the job for a full year, until Marshal Fernando Coutinho arrived from Portugal to reinforce successive orders from the king. Only twelve letters survive from Manuel to Albuquerque; the total number was clearly much higher, probably about the same as those received, because Albuquerque replied to numerous questions or comments from the king, who sent several packs of letters, entrusted to different captains, in every fleet of the *carreira da Índia*. The lost letters written by Albuquerque can also be reconstituted through chronicles, mainly the history of his actions in India composed by his only (illegitimate) son and heir, Brás de Albuquerque.[4]

Throughout the year, Albuquerque dictated notes for the future letters to his secretaries, reporting on the political problems he faced or narrating events in which he was involved, including military actions. Most of his letters are dated October or November, because they took their final form during the last months before the annual fleet departed for Lisbon, generally in December or at the latest in January. Despite the vast number of accumulated letters (the fifty-seven from 1514 must have been close to the real annual average), we must keep in mind that they were sent only once a year and generally took six months to

[4] João de Barros, *Ásia*, ed. António Baião and Luís F. Lindley Cintra, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1932–74); Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *História do descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos portugueses*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, 2 vols. (Porto: Lello, 1979); Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, 4 vols., ed. M. Lopes de Almeida (Porto: Lello, 1975); Damião de Góis, *Chronica do felicissimo rei Dom Emanuel*, 4 vols. (Lisbon: Francisco Correia, 1566–7); Jerónimo Osório, *De rebus Emmanuelis regis Lusitaniae invictissimi virtute et auspicio gestis* (Lisbon: António Gonçalves, 1571; translated into French in 1581 and English in 1752); Brás de Albuquerque, *Commentaries of the Great Afonso de Albuquerque* (original Portuguese edition 1557), trans. Walter de Gary Birch, 4 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1875–80).

reach Europe. Monsoons complicated matters further; their rhythms imposed a gap of twenty months in the elapsed time of communication between Lisbon and Goa. In a standard voyage, the fleet sailed from Lisbon in March and arrived at Goa in September. It could not start its return journey until December, reaching Lisbon in June. Thus King Manuel could only reply to Albuquerque's letters in March of the following year and his wishes would not be known until September. The result of this real-time distance was that royal reactions to important events, already reported with considerable delay, sometimes remained unknown two years after they happened. Within this cycle of communication, the king or the governor could use the traditional land routes from Europe to India via the Middle East for truly urgent information.

A governor thus had an extraordinary margin for decision-making which could be abused, as in the case of the first viceroy, Francisco de Almeida. Yet governors or captains were also in a position of weakness during a crisis of authority, for example when Albuquerque was imprisoned by his rival. We know that Albuquerque wrote the king careful reports about all his actions in Oman and the Persian Gulf in August and September 1507, when he destroyed or subjugated six ports, including Musqat and Hormuz. In January 1508, Albuquerque faced a major crisis after his captains deserted and sailed to India without notice, leaving him with only three ships to oppose the rebellious city of Hormuz and a strong Muslim fleet. In February 1508, Albuquerque reported these events to the viceroy in three letters, asking that the captains who had forced him to withdraw be punished.[5] Although he also wrote a complaint to the Portuguese king, only these letters have survived. The captains deserted because their long stay in Hormuz prevented them from intercepting the rich traffic to Mecca in the Red Sea, and from benefiting from loading the *carreira da Índia* in Cochin. They also complained about receiving no benefit from the tribute paid to the Portuguese king by Hormuz, and argued that Albuquerque could not hold them for such a long time while involved in a fierce dispute with the vizier of Hormuz, Khâja Atâ, over building a fort which was against the viceroy's strategy.

[5] *Cartas*, vol. I, pp. 6–19.

This was a typical conflict of interests. Albuquerque wanted to complete the fort in Hormuz, but had no intention of returning to India before the first viceroy's governorship ended in October 1508. Even when forced to withdraw from Hormuz, he sailed to the island of Socotra under pretext of rescuing its Portuguese garrison and stayed in the region for several months, until a new fleet arrived from Portugal, allowing him to return to the Gulf with more ships, manpower and artillery. He obviously had no intention of giving up his political and military autonomy from the Portuguese king to operate in that region; Albuquerque only remembered hierarchy when his captains fled to the viceroy, putting his entire operation at risk. The captains presumably understood Albuquerque's hidden agenda, which would have forced them into war for another year and a half without sufficient reward. The runaway captains managed to win protection from the viceroy, who needed their support to counter news of Albuquerque's appointment as his successor. Accepting the charges brought by the deserting captains against their captain-general, Almeida started legal proceedings and sent a messenger to Hormuz to relieve Albuquerque of his command.

Divergent political strategies over the means of Portuguese expansion in India during the first twenty years of the sixteenth century underpinned this conflict of interests. Almeida, supported by some captains and officials, preferred a strategy of exclusively maritime warfare to gain control over interregional and long-distance trade. Meanwhile, Albuquerque adopted the opposite strategy, arguing that maritime control could not be achieved without domination over key ports; access to the spice market and the subjection of major ports could never be secured through maritime power alone. The forts built at Cochin, Cannanore and Quilon to protect trade after the destruction of the Portuguese factory at Calicut in 1500 already defined a middle course between maritime trade and military presence on the coast through the construction of strongholds. However, the precarious situation of these forts, which depended on local alliances, became abundantly clear at Hormuz, where Albuquerque faced fierce local resistance to his projected fortress; indeed, he had to abandon it after most of his captains broke away. At the end of 1509, the destruction

of the Portuguese factory in Malacca, compelling its captain to retreat and leaving several Portuguese imprisoned by the sultan, strengthened arguments in favour of increased military action. In January 1510, the defeat of the Portuguese troops in Calicut was a major blow that defined Albuquerque's subsequent strategy.

Although the letters that Albuquerque wrote the king explaining the defeat at Calicut have been lost, the chronicles suggest their content, since Albuquerque emerges from the event completely blameless. They report that Marshal Fernando Coutinho insisted on destroying the city, claiming that he had precise orders from the king to do so. Coutinho asked for help from Albuquerque, who used all his ships and military forces in the operation. Due to the marshal's failures as a military commander, their landing at Calicut was quite chaotic. Coutinho wanted to be in the front line and had a violent argument with Albuquerque, who watched the first groups of Portuguese land in disorderly fashion and engage in military action with the local troops. The marshal rejected Albuquerque's advice to rest before assaulting the city. Instead, having landed far away, he and his troops had to make an exhausting hour-long march along the beach to the city. Nonetheless, they managed to force their way in. Coutinho, depicted as a stubborn, arrogant and unfit man who had to be carried by two soldiers, rested in the sabay's palace while his troops sacked the city and burned the main buildings. After several unheeded warnings, Albuquerque personally had to order the marshal's immediate withdrawal because the Portuguese were outnumbered by local reinforcements. Their retreat was chaotic; the marshal was killed along with several Portuguese noblemen among a total of eighty Portuguese fatalities. Albuquerque managed to escape, but his left arm was severely wounded.[6]

It was Albuquerque's first military action as India's governor. Even if the fleet remained untouched and only a minority of the troops had been killed (most of them the marshal's dependants), Albuquerque had received a major blow to his pride and knew that Portuguese prestige in India had been shaken. What amazes us is the speed of his recovery,

[6] Barros, *Ásia*, vol. 2, bk. IV, ch. 1; Lopes de Castanheda, *História do descobrimento*, bk. III, chs. 1–3; Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, vol. 2, chs. 1–3.

as also happened after Cortés was expelled from Tenochtitlán. Albuquerque immediately proposed an alliance with the King of Vijayanagara to defeat the sabay of Calicut while reorganising his fleet and troops for renewed military action – this time in the Red Sea, as King Manuel had instructed. In February 1510, already en route to Socotra, Albuquerque learned from local people that there were Turkish troops in Goa, provoking dissension between Hindus and Muslims. These Hindu mediators offered their assistance for a military operation. After consulting the captains of the fleet, Albuquerque decided to change course and invade Goa, which surrendered immediately. However, expelled by the reaction of Idal Khan, the regional ruler, Albuquerque stayed in Goa's waters with his fleet until he could pass the bar, which only happened in August. After waiting for new reinforcements from Portugal in Cannanore, he organised a new fleet with twenty-three ships and 2,000 men and successfully re-invaded Goa in November 1510.

In this period, Albuquerque's correspondence is quite scarce, with no reports on the first conquest and retreat from Goa. His first known letters to the king were written from Cannanore and dated 16, 17 and 19 October 1510, before sailing to Goa.[7] He justified the conquest of Goa by arguing that it was essential for Portuguese security in India, because of the constant presence of Turkish troops (a 'defensive' argument used by all politicians engaged in military offensives to this day). He emphasised Goa's agricultural wealth – it could feed an army more easily than other ports – its industrial shipbuilding capacity from specialised craftsmen, and its position as a main trading port for wood, iron and saltpetre. As we know, the official decision to conquer Goa was taken in February 1510. The final conquest, on 25 November 1510, happened just in time to send the news back via the *carreira da Índia* ships anchored at Cochin. His final letter of that year, written on 22 December, mentions a previous long report on the conquest of Goa, adding details about persecuting the Turks, the alliance with local 'gentiles', administrative decisions, military booty sent to the king, and the marriage of more than 200 Portuguese men

[7] *Cartas*, vol. 1, pp. 19–25.

with (unwillingly) converted Muslim women, whom he described as 'white and good-looking'.[8]

The arguments in favour of the operation and the final result of the military actions were sent with the same fleet, and the king's reaction would not be known in India before September 1512, although news travelled fast through the Middle East. Albuquerque thus enjoyed a huge autonomy to take extremely dangerous decisions, which threatened the very existence of the Portuguese 'enterprise' in India. In the meantime, he was much more dependent on approval from his captains than from his king. But because royal approval was ultimately essential for keeping his office and maintaining his authority, Albuquerque's letters to the king gave detailed information about his military and diplomatic actions, the political situation in the Indian Ocean, and various administrative and commercial problems. He needed to persuade King Manuel of his mastery of intelligence, strategic vision, commercial wisdom, and decision-making capacity. Briefly, he needed political support to implement his vision of 'Portuguese India'.

The conquest of Goa proved an ambiguous achievement. Albuquerque's activities in the Persian Gulf during 1507 could be justified as implementations of direct instructions from the king (previously convinced by Albuquerque himself), but the conquest of Goa had not been mentioned in any royal instructions. Although Albuquerque managed to assert his political authority in India in the eyes of the other powers and also of the Portuguese, he still faced strong criticism over the political and financial impact of his achievement. Albuquerque's letters before and after the conquest demonstrate a full awareness of the criticisms addressed to the king by the captain, factor, vicar and secretary of Cochin, who viewed the possible transfer of Portugal's political, commercial and financial centre to Goa as a threat.[9] They pointed out the excessive expenses involved in maintaining troops and keeping the territory under control. Thus, the conquest of Goa renewed an old divide between those favouring a commercial enterprise, based on military control of the maritime trade routes (and permanent corsair booty) and those favouring the conquest of key

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 27. [9] *Cartas*, vol. 3, pp. 48–51, 337–56, 380–406.

ports to reinforce a monopoly of maritime trade, with a *Pax Lusitana* based on permanent offices distributed by the king or the governor.

Even before its conquest, the political battle was to convince the king to maintain Goa. This is obvious from the letters written by Albuquerque early in November 1510, before the final invasion. He drew up a global blueprint for the future Portuguese presence in India, advising the king to conquer four key ports (Aden, Diu, Hormuz and Goa), build four factories (Khambhat, Hormuz, Cochin and Malacca), and use three ports to load ships (Cochin, Cannanore and Quilon).[10] Albuquerque explicitly contested the arguments in favour of a Portuguese presence in India based strictly on naval power, stating that it involved immense cost for reduced results, leaving the factories permanently vulnerable. He insisted that territorial conquest would generate increased financial resources, as well as better distribution of manpower and military resources. He maintained pressure on the king to send arms, mainly spears, pikes and shields, more men, and 'Swiss captains' to discipline the troops. Most of Albuquerque's requests were satisfied, including Swiss-style captains and German canon-makers and operators,[11] allowing him to develop military campaigns during the most intense period of Portuguese conquests in the Indian Ocean. However, Albuquerque's political position was not secure, and he bitterly felt the criticism from high officials in Cochin.

In view of this political context, and given his real-time distance from Portugal, Albuquerque's decision to conquer Malacca, implemented in July 1511, comes as no surprise. He was exploiting the conquest of Goa, which obviously galvanised his soldiers, but he was also deliberately creating another *fait accompli* to avoid any possible royal decision to abandon territorial conquest. In this case, he disobeyed explicit orders from the king, who had sent Diogo Mendes de Vasconcelos with a small fleet to end the conflict around the factory in Malacca. First Albuquerque used Vasconcelos's troops and ships to conquer Goa, then left Vasconcelos as captain in Goa and decided to command the conquest of Malacca himself. This time, his critics emphasised the way Albuquerque abandoned the factories in India,

[10] *Cartas*, vol. 1, p. 419. [11] *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 105.

removing troops and making the Portuguese enterprise vulnerable – similar criticisms to those levelled at Cortés when he decided to explore Central America. There is another gap in the corpus of letters written by Albuquerque, despite some indication that he sent the king a report about the conquest of Malacca in October 1511. His letter to the king in April 1512 is a bitter one; for the first time, he criticised officials in Cochin (and Goa) for not executing his orders to maintain and repair the ships left, for opposing marriages between Portuguese men and local women, for allowing Portuguese to escape to enemy territory, and for deliberately damaging his authority by spreading rumours of the arrival of a new governor.

For the first time, Albuquerque even made a veiled criticism of the king, lamenting his preference for defending territories conquered by his predecessors over the new acquisitions that augmented the king's reputation.[12] Albuquerque was obviously referring to the North African forts, which King Manuel was launching major efforts to consolidate and expand in 1513 and 1514. The governor was well informed in India, even if he exaggerated his information for propaganda purposes. The same letter further criticised the king for his contradictory instructions, such as restricting war and making peace with the Muslims while simultaneously ordering forts to be built and maritime trade with Jeddah, Mecca and Cairo to be destroyed.

Albuquerque's letters to the king between August and December 1512 showed their author in a mellow mood. In recognition and reward for the conquest of Goa, Albuquerque had been made a member of the royal council; moreover, he had received substantial reinforcements of men and arms, allowing him to plan new expeditions. He replied to several enquiries on administrative appointments, revealing the king's intention to monopolise the power of appointment. Albuquerque also reported on the provision of forts such as Cochin, and the destruction of the fort at Socotra, which he had suggested to the king. Having decided to expose the incompetence of the royal factor at Cochin, Albuquerque also wrote extensively about commercial matters like the loading of the *carreira da Índia*. He developed his vision of the

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 33–4.

future of Portuguese rule in India, providing new information on the political situation in the region and responding to royal instructions to block maritime trade to the Red Sea. In addition, he reported the conquest of a fort near Goa, which could threaten the city's security. Finally, he insisted on correcting the real number of the Portuguese in India: there were 1,200 before the arrival of the fleet in 1512, most of them without arms.

His mood had changed radically in his letters written between November 1513 and January 1514. In March 1513, Albuquerque had been defeated in Aden; worse still, when he returned to Goa in September, he received several letters from the king, who apparently accused him of bad management and of abandoning India for the conquest of Malacca. The king summoned a council of all the captains and high officials to hear their opinions on maintaining Goa, and forbade further weddings between Portuguese men and local women. These instructions, which explicitly contradicted his policies, exasperated Albuquerque. Weddings were an important issue; to Albuquerque, they were a sign to natives that the Portuguese wanted to settle permanently. It had political importance; Albuquerque's correspondence clearly recognised that the Portuguese did not have the 'strength' (here meaning manpower) to build a structured power in India without local alliances involving native people. His policy of weddings, launched immediately after the conquest of Goa and offering rewards (lands, rents, jobs) for these new couples, was a practical expression of Albuquerque's vision for a future *Estado da Índia*. If opposition to this policy revealed deep racism against local women, Albuquerque replied at the same level, maintaining that the weddings involved only white Muslim and Brahman women and not 'morally corrupt' (*sic*) black Hindu women.[13]

In April 1512, Albuquerque reported that there were 200 (mixed) couples in Goa and another 100 in Cochin and Cannanore. His purpose was to create a new Christian elite who would gradually control land and property, while his opposition maintained a policy which envisioned a purely Portuguese maritime enterprise. Acknowledging

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 31, 63, 338.

the king's express order, the governor declared that no new weddings would take place.[14] Yet the issue was not closed, because the king returned to it the following year; and Albuquerque, while submitting again to his orders, offered new arguments in support of his previous policy. Moreover, he found an interesting solution: new mixed weddings would occur only with rich widows, to avoid scandals, where royal finances were not at stake.[15] This is a typical example of how the governor could twist a direct order from the king, because what is implicit is that if there was no involvement of royal finances, such weddings could take place.

Albuquerque implicitly made the link between this racist issue and Jews in a letter dated 1513: 'I wish to know', he asked, 'if you consider it to be in your service to let Castilian and Portuguese Jews circulate in India via Cairo, or if Your Highness wants me to snuff them out [*apagar*] one by one wherever I find them.'[16] This brutal phrase must be understood within an extremely tense political context, because the Portuguese captains and governors of the *Estado da Índia*, including Albuquerque, always used Jews as informants and translators. Comparing this phrase with others written by Albuquerque – for instance, when he outrageously asked the king whether new appointments should be examined by himself or by his critics[17] – enables us to conclude that this is a clear case of Albuquerque's speaking freely in order to express contempt for royal policies.

Autumn 1513 marked a turning point in Albuquerque's relationship with his critics. Deciding that the time for dissimulation and soft words was over, he openly denounced the captains and high officials at Cochin and Cannanore who were involved in the intrigue against him as liars, incompetent, traitors and corrupt. Moreover, he accused them of revealing secrets of the *Estado da Índia*, serving the interests of the Rajah of Cochin, being paid by Muslims, and using royal revenues for their own profit and trade.[18] His letters make it clear that Albuquerque had decided to strike back and attack officials who opposed his policies. He announced to the king that he had removed Duarte Barbosa, the

[14] *Ibid*, p. 191. [15] *Ibid.*, p. 298. [16] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 187. [18] *Ibid.* pp. 122–32.

factor of Cannanore and ringleader of all the revolts, from his office.[19] He wrote that if he had had the monarch's complete trust, he would have placed the heads of those officials on the walls of Calicut, but he had been forced to restrain himself because they had royal support.[20] In his last letter, written on 1 January 1514, Albuquerque revealed that he had found the 'mine' that drafted the letters which his critics had sent to the king. He expressed surprise that they dared to write so many lies, and directly criticised the king for encouraging dissent, saying that he was only surprised that with such informants, the king had not decided to 'burn' the entire enterprise. Albuquerque's reaction to those documents revealed his character: he organised an assembly of noblemen and officials, and published those letters accusing him of the worst crimes. António Real, captain of Cochin, after swearing on the Gospels that these letters contained only lies, accused two other accomplices, Diogo Pereira (the royal factor) and Gaspar Pereira (the governor's royally appointed secretary).[21]

This move was quite risky, because Albuquerque was explicitly attacking high officials with royal protection. Yet he had no choice, because the survival of his government and of his policies was at stake. Perhaps he knew that the king's character was vulnerable to political pressure: certainly King Manuel's policies offer an example of zigzagging imposed by a balance of power, not only in overseas expansion, but also in his policies towards Jews and 'New Christians'.[22] His decision to smash the 'Cochin group' (which represented a matter of personal interest, not just an expression of divergent political strategy)[23] was a victory for Albuquerque, because maintaining his conquests would never again be disputed. However, the eventual price was his replacement. Albuquerque's letters went further, implicitly railing against the king's right to appoint officials in India; he complained that he could

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 134. [20] *Ibid.*, p. 137. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 260.

[22] Francisco Bethencourt, 'A expulsão dos judeu', in Diogo Ramada Curto (ed.), *O Tempo de Vasco da Gama* (Lisbon: Difel, 1998), pp. 271–80.

[23] This criticism is directed against the anachronistic interpretation of Inácio Guerreiro and Vítor Luís Gaspar Rodrigues, 'O "grupo de Cochim" e a oposição a Afonso de Albuquerque', *Studia* 51 (1992), 119–44, opposing the 'Cochin group' as an expression of a 'liberal' or 'free-trade' policy, to Albuquerque's 'state-oriented' policy, even defined as an 'authoritarian state' aiming to 'conquer the Muslim empire'.

not even nominate a ship's notary, because every position, from the captain of a fort to a notary, was appointed by the king[24] – although in the same letters Albuquerque reported his appointments of captains for both ships and forts.

Taking control of the new offices created by Asian conquests, King Manuel decided to appoint new men who, on arrival in India, would replace the captains and factors appointed by Albuquerque. One can easily imagine the conflicts aroused by this practice. The governor rewarded men who had fought and sometimes been wounded in India with new responsibilities, which they must relinquish to new arrivals from Portugal. The political struggle was a very common one: the king wanted to assert his power at a great distance by controlling the main source of authority, the creation of offices and the appointment of clients; meanwhile, Albuquerque, as governor, could make rapid nominations to avoid a power vacuum and remove other people from office on the grounds of incompetence. However, there were political limits on the governor's autonomy, especially if he wanted to stay in office beyond the traditional three-year mandate. Albuquerque stated in one letter that he wished to die in India serving the king, and also dramatised his reduced powers, while assuring the king that all royal appointments had been provided.[25]

The king also established some control over administrative issues by reducing Albuquerque's autonomy while increasing the authority of captains and factors. All twelve known letters from the king focus on such administrative issues, filled with minutiae about appointments, payment of salaries and distribution of such privileges as private space in the royal navy for carrying merchandise. Although a king should ideally think in strategic terms, it is undeniable that such constant pressure on the governor of the *Estado da Índia* implied the establishment of a permanent hierarchy and respect for different competences and regular administrative procedures. This explains why Albuquerque was never in charge of the *carreira da Índia*, which was instead the responsibility of the royal factor in Cochin. The governor was even supposed to avoid Cochin when the ships were loaded – a measure

[24] *Cartas*, vol. 1, p. 142. [25] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

that Albuquerque accepted gladly, because it gave him an opportunity to undertake new expeditions and escape local intrigue. Nonetheless, he still managed to inform the king about such matters as the administration of tribute, war booty and rents from conquered territories. The problem was that the king was not totally coherent. He accepted the intrusion of senior officials in the governor's policies and asked the governor to guarantee the good loading of the *carreira da Índia*. This latitude allowed Albuquerque to criticise the royal factors' incompetence, make long reports on trade, and even advise the king that he would be better off being robbed by two Florentines than served by his factors.[26]

The main issue in the set of letters from autumn 1513 was the meeting about maintaining Goa. Albuquerque was obviously furious, but nevertheless dealt with the problem with political tact. He informed the king that he had executed the consultation exactly as ordered, but he could not hold a public council that would provoke unrest and threaten the preservation of the *Estado da Índia*. Instead, he asked for an oath of secrecy from all captains, one by one, who were asked to write and sign their opinion on the subject. If the matter was discussed at a public council, he as governor would have to present his opinion and thereby influence some people. He reminded the king that the conquest of Goa had been decided only after four consultations with the captains, who had signed documents (which Albuquerque had already sent) in favour of the enterprise.[27] Interestingly, this procedure killed the issue, and was significantly complemented in the following years by the removal of his main critics.

One of those letters records the defeat at Aden. Albuquerque described his attempt to take the castle and the destruction of the ladders, isolating the Portuguese who had already scaled the walls. He blamed his ultimate withdrawal on a lack of military equipment; but the question is why Albuquerque did not make a clear breach by bombarding the walls, as his captains suggested after the attack failed. He also indicated the vulnerability of future actions because of the absence of water around Aden. After Albuquerque's expedition burned all the

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 155. [27] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

ships anchored at Aden, his fleet became the first European military force to enter the Red Sea. Making the island of Kamaran his centre of operations, Albuquerque sent a caravel to explore the archipelagos of Dahlak and Suakin. He included several descriptions of the area to complete his report on the political situation on both banks from Aden to Suez. Albuquerque's writing skills are evident in this report, which managed to transform a military defeat into a useful operation in which a Portuguese fleet blockaded maritime traffic in the Red Sea, provoking huge damage at Jeddah, Mecca and Cairo. He advertised the future uses of the information gathered in the Red Sea; he further proposed to return to Aden and build a fort at Massawa, which was controlled by Muslims but situated near the kingdom of Prester John.[28]

It was probably during these dark days in autumn 1513 that Albuquerque wrote letters to Duarte Galvão and Martinho de Castelo Branco, his greatest friends at the Portuguese court. He complained about intrigues, defended himself against such accusations as neglecting India to conquer Malacca, and argued that any decision to abandon Goa should be taken only after the king sent four major advisers to see the city's value for themselves. Albuquerque also elaborated on the military and diplomatic strategies he proposed for India.[29]

His correspondence from autumn 1514 reveals a certain appeasement. News of the king's approval of the conquest of Malacca must have had a major impact on Albuquerque's mood.[30] Making an important reinforcement in Albuquerque's authority, the king had authorised the governor to fill certain administrative and military posts,[31] allowing Albuquerque to distribute privileges in the king's name up to the considerable value of 8,000 *cruzados* per year. The governor thanked the king for this major favour in colourful language: 'people felt I had better face and better eyes' ('pareceu à gente que eu tinha melhor rosto e melhores olhos') and 'I now look more beautiful, and people work better to please me' ('lhes pareço já agora mais formoso, e se trabalham mais por me comprazer').[32] The king also elevated

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 209–39. [29] *Ibid.*, pp. 395–414. [30] *Ibid.*, pp. 304–5.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 363. [32] *Ibid.*, pp. 294 and 363.

António Fonseca, Albuquerque's private secretary, to the status of royal esquire.[33] In a relaxed way, Albuquerque could point out to the king that the *galardões* (new positions and privileges) created by the expansion in India 'remove many obligations from you' ('vos tiram de muita obrigação'),[34] underlining the role of the conquests in the king's distributive functions of rewarding vassals and reinforcing patronage ties.

His reinforced prestige at court encouraged Albuquerque to pursue his critics. He wrote a long letter accusing Gaspar Pereira, the royally appointed governor's secretary, of taking bribes from notaries and (like the 'Cochin group') loading ships with his own copper and pepper against royal regulations. Albuquerque described Pereira's many shortcomings as secretary in order to justify his decision to expel him from office and send him back to Lisbon.[35] Pereira's disgrace had the king's implicit authorisation, since he left Albuquerque free to decide the matter as he wished, and asked his opinion about naming a new secretary. In response, Albuquerque requested someone virtuous and competent, who gave good advice and kept secrecy, to be appointed.[36] Yet the governor did not dare punish his critics in India further. He wanted to marginalise the 'Cochin group' in public opinion,[37] remove them from office and send them back to Lisbon, defining a paradigm of action for future governors.

Obviously affected by his defeat at Aden, for the first time Albuquerque stayed in India for almost eighteen months, from September 1513 to February 1515. In autumn 1513, he negotiated peace with the new sabay of Calicut, despite opposition from the captain and senior officials in Cochin. Albuquerque defended this act by showing the contradictions in previous royal instructions on the matter, and eventually obtained royal approval. Albuquerque now worked mostly as a diplomat and as a politician who wanted to control his administration in India. He reported extensively on commercial matters, recommending

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 292. [34] *Ibid.*, p. 293. [35] *Ibid.*, p. 291. [36] *Ibid.*, pp. 284–9.

[37] Bernard Guenée, *L'opinion publique à la fin du moyen Age, d'après la 'Chronique de Charles VI' du Religieux de Saint Denis* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), proves that 'public opinion' was not an invention of the Enlightenment, but existed since at least the Middle Ages.

lists of products to be sent to different ports, and gave new advice on negotiations at Khambhat, Surat, Sofala, Pegu and Sumatra. While improving administrative methods and introducing greater control over rents and tribute, Albuquerque never stopped criticising the king for trusting his trade and factories to courtiers rather than intelligent and knowledgeable merchants.[38]

During this period, Albuquerque reacted strongly against any slur on his reputation. One charge levelled at him by the 'Cochin group' was the supposed sale of slaves to men who would marry them; he immediately opened an inquiry to clear his name.[39] In November 1514, Albuquerque revealed that he had decided to sail to the Persian Gulf instead of the Red Sea, as he had previously said,[40] in order to take supplies to people at the factory and consolidate Portugal's grip on an island which he considered the key to India. He expressed himself thus: 'I am determined to sail to Hormuz to find the means to eat' ('estou determinado cometer o caminho d'Ormuz para termos que comer'), meaning that he intended to increase revenues and achieve Portuguese economic self-sufficiency in India. He was proved correct, because Hormuz remained one of the most profitable factories in the *Estado da Índia* until 1622, when it was invaded by the British in coalition with Persian forces.[41]

Albuquerque's final period in India was essentially characterised by administrative reorganisation. He replaced Pereira with Pero Alpoim, whom the king had sent as an *ouvidor* (judge). This position was given back to Vasco de Vilhena, member of the Order of Christ and 'good Latinist' ('homem latino').[42] The governor also decided to remove Garcia Coelho, notary of the royal finances in Cochin, accusing him of corruption and mismanagement, and appointing Pero Barreto to replace him.[43] Albuquerque also intervened in favour of

[38] *Cartas*, vol. 1, p. 274. [39] *Ibid.*, p. 337. [40] *Ibid.*, pp. 345–6.

[41] Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Les finances de l'état Portugais des Indes Orientales (1517–1635)* (Paris: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1982); Francisco Bethencourt, 'O Estado da Índia', in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri (eds.), *História da expansão portuguesa*, vol. 2 (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1998), esp. pp. 294–303 on receipts and expenses.

[42] *Cartas*, vol. 1, pp. 351–2. [43] *Ibid.*, pp. 364–5.

Pero Alvares, who was married to his niece but had been ignored in royal appointments.[44] The most significant letter of the year concerned Albuquerque's own advancement. He complained that despite thirty-eight years of military service (since 1476, at the battle of Toro) he had never obtained the reward he deserved from successive kings and declared that his conquests in India should be motive enough for the king to elevate his status: 'ela por si obriga Vossa Alteza fazerdes grande quem assim conquistou'.[45] It is obvious that Albuquerque wanted a noble title because he boasted that he already possessed a coat of arms and lineage. But in contrast to Cortés, who had a much humbler social background, Albuquerque never received a title. Albuquerque was the anchor and founder of a grandiose but insecure enterprise, whose questionable merits would change radically over time. He could not have imagined the standard practice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when viceroys negotiated new titles with the king before accepting the post.

Albuquerque wrote only three letters to the king in autumn 1515. The first, dated September, reported the construction of the fort at Hormuz and the administrative situation in the *Estado da Índia*, including a list of ships' captains; the second was a recommendation on behalf of one of his captains; the last, written on his way back to Goa and dated 6 December 1515, reported his suffering and was dictated from his death-bed. One of the shortest letters he ever wrote to the king, it declared that he was going to die, leaving only his (illegitimate) son 'for his memory' and declaring him his sole heir. Albuquerque asked the king to transfer his *tenças* (rents on royal revenues) to his son and make him a grandee, thereby compensating for the service that he himself, the governor, had given in India. Albuquerque briefly referred to his achievements: 'the things from India will speak for me . . . I leave it with the main heads conquered, in your power, with no open issue except control of the strait [Red Sea].'[46]

Since at least the beginning of November, Albuquerque had known that he had been replaced in the government of India by one of his enemies, Lopo Soares de Albergaria. Reportedly, he even received a

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 353–5. [45] *Ibid.*, p. 360. [46] *Ibid.*, pp. 380–1.

letter from the ambassador of Shah Ismael inviting him to become a leading lord in Persia.[47] Albuquerque's illness was reported as early as September 1515. Feeling himself near death, he drew up his will, appointed the captain and senior officials of Hormuz, and organised a final council with his captains to decide the main matters affecting the *Estado da Índia*. He died within sight of Goa. His body, dressed in the habit of the Order of Santiago, was carried in procession beneath its pall to the chapel of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, followed by all the noblemen, clergy and people in a highly emotional scene of mourning and weeping. The 'gentiles' were reported as saying 'it could not be that he was dead, but that God had needed him for some war and had therefore sent for him'.[48]

King Manuel's zigzagging policies continued, still trapped by the constraints of real-time communication between Lisbon and Goa. Hearing rumours that the Sultan of Cairo was preparing a huge army to prevent the conquest of Hormuz, he organised a new fleet for India in March 1516, dispatching a letter to the new governor ordering that Albuquerque, if he was still in India, should remain as commander-in-chief of the troops facing the sultan's army. According to this letter, Lopo Soares de Albergaria would become governor of Cochin and Malacca, with control over the *carreira da Índia*, while Afonso de Albuquerque would be the governor of all other forts, with control over the army.[49] Albuquerque's death prevented certain dissent in the *Estado da Índia*.

In the six years of his government, Albuquerque never managed to win solid or consistent political support from the king, but he could nevertheless implement the policies he defined in the field, imposing them on the royal court. Albuquerque also failed to obtain a title for himself or his son Brás, although he only requested one at quite a late stage. Renamed Afonso by the king, Brás received 180,000 *cruzados*, part of the huge amount of money that the crown owed his father, plus a permanent *tença* of 300,000 *réis* annually. This man of letters wrote a biography of his father the governor, built two famous Italian-style

[47] Brás de Albuquerque, *Commentaries*, vol. 4, p. 195.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 198. [49] *Ibid.*, pp. 200–4; *Cartas*, vol. 4, pp. 30–1.

palaces (*Casa dos Bicos* in Lisbon and *Quinta da Bacalhoa* in Azeitão), was employed on diplomatic missions and became president of the Lisbon senate. Although Afonso de Albuquerque never benefited personally from his conquests, his descendents or 'clan' (families to which he was connected, like the future dukes of Aveiro and counts of Linhares) occupied the highest posts at the royal court as well as in India, Brazil and Africa.

POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

The standard edition of letters sent by Cortés to Emperor Charles V consists of five long reports written between July 1519 and September 1526.[50] The second, third and fourth letters were printed almost immediately in Castilian, then rapidly disseminated throughout Europe in Latin, Italian, German, French and Flemish. Cortés's letters were reprinted in the following centuries, but with a hiatus in Spain from 1525 until 1749 due to a royal order dated March 1527, prohibiting their publication and sale.[51] The first and the last letters were discovered only in the nineteenth century, defining the standard one-volume edition.

The first *carta de relación* was not printed in Spain by Cortés's agents because it was disguised as a letter from the new municipal council of Vera Cruz, a mainland community created by Cortés's expedition 'in the name of the king' to evade the political hierarchy and legal control of the governor of Cuba, Diego Velázquez. This first step revealed Cortés's intelligence and his knowledge of medieval Castilian laws, which recognised communities' autonomous initiative to create their own settlements and request recognition from the king. Having been

[50] Hernán Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, ed. Anthony Pagden, introd. by J. H. Elliott, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); *Cartas de Relación*, ed. Angel Delgado Gómez (Madrid: Castalia, 1993). Both editions boast extremely accurate introductions, notes and comments, with a good critical approach. For an extended edition of letters by and to Cortés, including government decisions, instructions, petitions and succession documents, see Hernán Cortés, *Cartas y documentos*, ed. Mario Hernández Sanchez Barba (Mexico: Porrua, 1963).

[51] Marcel Bataillon, 'Hernán Cortés, autor proibido', in *Libro Jubilar de Alfonso Reyes* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1963), pp. 77–82.

'elected' by his men as judge and captain, Cortés could address the emperor directly on behalf of that community, signing the letter alongside Alonso de Avila and Alonso de Grado, its 'elected' treasurer and financial supervisor 'of the king'. The *relación* was dated 10 July 1519 (five months after setting sail from Cuba) and reached the emperor in Valladolid at the beginning of April 1520. This delay cannot be attributed to the great distance between Mexico and Spain: Cortés's agents (Alonso Fernández Puerto Carrero and Francisco Montejo) embarked at Vera Cruz on 16 July and arrived at Sanlucar de Barrameda, Seville's seaport, in early October. They would have completed the standard two-month return trip had they not stopped over in Cuba, against their instructions. Although the real-time distance from Mexico to Seville (via Vera Cruz, which soon became Mexico's key port) was considerably less than the real-time distance from Goa to Lisbon (aggravated by the monsoon season), it still took several years to organise a regular circuit of communication. The subsequent five-month wait before Cortés's agents met the emperor was partly due to their ship and freight, including gifts for the king, being confiscated by the *Casa de Contratación* in Seville. The institution had accepted a request to do this from Velázquez's chaplain, who was in the city and accused Cortés and his men of robbery and betrayal. Cortés's agents had to convince the emperor's staff of the seriousness of their purpose.

Puerto Carrero and Montejo, assisted by Martín Cortés, the *conquistador*'s father, were acting in a politically complicated period. Charles V had summoned the *Cortes* (parliament or assembly of the three orders) to Santiago de Compostela, near La Coruña, where he would embark for Flanders and, from there, travel to Aachen, where he would be invested as emperor. The king's absence, combined with the threat of Spain's political subordination to imperial concerns, spread discontent in both Castile and Aragon; it reached a climax some months after Charles's departure with the outbreak of the *Comunero* revolt in Castile, and a year later with the *Germanías* revolt in Valencia and the Balearic Islands. Despite the tangle of conflicting political issues at that particular conjuncture, Cortés's agents (presumably aided by rumours of the wealth involved) managed to obtain the release of the ship and its freight. When they were finally granted a meeting, the

gifts they had brought (which included pure gold, huge sculpted gold and silver plates, and a large quantity of jewellery, feather-work and cloth) had already been delivered to the emperor, who took them with him to Flanders. In Brussels, they were apparently exhibited to a select group of people, including Albrecht Dürer, who called them the most wonderful objects he had ever seen.[52]

The impact of these 'marvels' should not be underestimated: in sending Charles V all his best 'acquisitions', Cortés had made the correct decision. Although Puerto Carrero and Montejo failed to obtain the emperor's support for Cortés's project, they did manage to have the accusation of treason suspended, despite protests from the governor of Cuba, supported at court by Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos, the councillor responsible for affairs in the Indies, thus keeping the emperor 'neutral' while awaiting the final result of Cortés's enterprise.

Thus the first letter must be placed in conjunction with the objects sent at the same time and with the agents who reported the facts and made its text 'real'. This first communication between Cortés and the emperor offers an excellent example of 'multimedia' propaganda, enacted simultaneously through text, visual art and oral testimony. At its very beginning, the letter directly addressed the information about the recently discovered land (Yucatán) given to the emperor by the governor of Cuba and dismissed it as inaccurate. It then described the failure of two previous expeditions to explore the region, and continued by exposing Diego Velázquez's intrigues to obtain the rights to explore and conquer from the governors of Santo Domingo and the royal court, accusing him of cupidity, only being interested in plunder,

[52] Albrecht Dürer, *Diary of his Journey to the Netherlands, 1520–1521*, ed. J.-A. Goris and G. Marlier (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), p. 64: 'I saw the things which have been brought to the king from the new land of gold, a sun all of gold a whole fathom broad, and a moon all of silver of the same size, also two rooms full of the armour of the people there, and all manner of wondrous weapons of theirs, harness and darts, very strange clothing, beds, and all kinds of wonderful objects of human use, much better worth seeing than prodigies. These things were all so precious that they are valued at 100,000 florins. All the days of my life I have seen nothing that rejoiced my heart so much as these things, for I saw amongst them wonderful works of art, and I marvelled at the subtle ingenia of men in foreign lands.'

and claiming investments in ships and equipment which mostly belonged to the navigators. The letter then described Cortés's expedition, with its careful exploration of the coasts of Yucatán and Mexico before deciding to land at a place now called Vera Cruz. The self-image projected by Cortés was carefully composed to display him as a serious explorer who established fair relationships with indigenous people, who kept his word, avoided plundering and gathered information. He was also presented as a pious man wishing to spread Christ's message, a responsible captain who risked his expedition to save the lives of countrymen captured by Indians, a good subject who systematically imposed vassalage to his king, and a soldier who defeated resistance with military determination. In a word, he emerged as a man guided by service to the king, not self-interest.

The foundation of the new city of Vera Cruz was depicted as a collective act which the captain accepted. The letter stated that the *cabildo* (municipal council) read the powers and instructions given by Diego Velázquez and decided that they were no longer valid. Cortés saw his previous status revoked by the *cabildo* and was promptly reinvested as judge and captain to maintain peace and government in the king's name. Naturally, the letter explained why Cortés had been chosen: he had experience of service in the islands, and had exercised his responsibilities to general satisfaction; he had invested all his money in the expedition, but shown no interest in material gain, only in royal service. The *relación* then clarified his legal rupture from the governor of Cuba: 'we [the *cabildo*] received him in Your Royal name, into our council and chamber, as chief justice and captain of Your Royal armies, and so he is and shall remain until Your Majesties [Queen Juana and her son, King Charles] provide whatever is suitable to Your service'.[53] The letter then declared that they had decided to send all the first spoils from the land (not just the fifth part, which by law belonged to the crown) as a demonstration of their satisfaction in serving the king.

The last part of the letter addressed the issue of the concessions demanded by Velázquez, asking the king to deny or to revoke them

[53] *Letters from Mexico*, pp. 27–8.

because the greedy governor of Cuba would never have sent the king the objects they had 'acquired' and offered. They further accused him of the bad administration of justice in the islands and unfair division of the Indians, demanding an inspection (*residencia*) of his activities in order to remove him from his office. Claiming their status as settlers in a new land, the *cabildo* requested the king to provide 'a decree and letters-patent in favour of Fernando Cortés . . . so that he may govern us with justice until this land is conquered and pacified, and for as long as Your Majesties may see fit'.[54]

The second letter, dated 30 October 1520, was already signed by Cortés as 'Captain-General of New Spain'. The significant designation chosen for the land by the *conquistador* appeared here for the first time, in a clear projection of the Roman and medieval geographical concept of Iberia (Hispania). In this letter, written at Segura de la Frontera, the second town created by Spaniards in Mexico, Cortés addressed King Charles as 'most invincible Emperor' and immediately established a parallel between the size and richness of the lands he was conquering and the Holy Roman Empire: 'One might call oneself the Emperor of this kingdom with no less glory than that of Germany, which, by the Grace of God, Your Sacred Majesty already possesses.'[55] He justified his long silence by claiming that he had no news from the agents he had dispatched to the royal court, and that he had been occupied in conquering and pacifying the land. Obviously, communication between the New World and Castile was not yet well established.

The *relación* disclosed Cortés's project to conquer the territories ruled by Montezuma.[56] The *conquistadores* had established an alliance with the people of Cempoal, the native city dominating the region around Vera Cruz, who decided to join the Castilians and break their

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 39. [55] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[56] To deconstruct Cortés's *relaciones* as systematic political manipulation, see Inga Clendinnen, 'Cortés, signs, and the conquest of Mexico', in Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair (eds.), *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), pp. 87–130. I do not share all the author's interpretations of Cortés's psychology or his (mis)understanding of local signs. Here I am simply trying to analyse the meaning of the narrative within a European intellectual and political framework.

ties with Montezuma. On 16 August 1519, Cortés began an expedition to Tenochtitlán; his main purposes were to destabilise the peripheries of the 'empire', as he had done at Cempoal, and build alliances to overthrow Montezuma. This explains why Cortés engaged in perpetual fights with local peoples in order to subjugate them and break their previous allegiance. His alliance with the people of Tlaxcala, after a series of battles in which he defeated the local army, proved crucial, because this was the only regional territory independent of Mexica rule. By now, Montezuma was aware of Cortés's presence and the disruption he was provoking in the territories of the Triple Alliance, and consequently sent an embassy with gifts. According to the *relación*, the ambassadors, greatly impressed by Tlaxcala's submission to Cortés, accepted vassalage to Charles V and offered tribute to avoid the entrance of Castilian troops into Tenochtitlán.

Resisting the pressure from the embassy, Cortés proceeded with his expedition to Tenochtitlán; Cholula, the holy city of the Triple Alliance, became his next target. It was taken only after thousands of men had been exterminated under the pretext of a plot to kill Cortés and his troops. Five thousand Indians from Tlaxcala and 400 from Cempoal fought alongside the Castilian troops, a clear indication of a coming attack on Tenochtitlán, where Cortés used Indians from every province he had conquered. Local conspiracies and the troops gathered around Cholula offered sufficient pretexts for accusing Montezuma of duplicity, threatening him with a devastating war and demanding that he clearly submit to Charles V. The letter depicted Montezuma's position as a defensive one from the very start, employing diplomatic rather than military skills to convince Cortés to abandon his plan, an approach maintained until he was in sight of Tenochtitlán at the beginning of November 1519.

The reception given to Cortés by Montezuma and the Mexica nobility outside Tenochtitlán formed an important part of this *relación*;[57] political ritual was used to express self-representation, define hierarchies and project perceptions of power. Cortés did not perform the native ceremonies of greeting, but merely stood and watched them

[57] *Letters from Mexico*, pp. 84–5.

as the main recipient. By that time, he must have been aware of most rituals; ignoring local habits and displaying distance in such a theatrical arena was a decisive political decision. Moreover, Cortés underlined his superior position by sitting on a horse. When Montezuma approached, Cortés dismounted and advanced to embrace him – a gesture which clearly placed him at the same level as the Mexica ruler ('Great Speaker King', *Uei Tlatoani*, in Nahuatl). The two lords next to Montezuma prevented Cortés from actually touching their leader. Then Montezuma, these two leading lords and the Mexica nobility greeted Cortés one by one, and kissed the earth. Montezuma's brother took the *conquistador* by the arm, while the ruler went ahead with the other lord. During the procession, Cortés managed to communicate with Montezuma by taking a necklace of pearls and cut glass he was wearing and placing it round the Mexica ruler's neck. Montezuma returned the gesture, ordering two necklaces to be brought and also placing them round Cortés's neck. If accurate, this description means that Montezuma accepted Cortés as a leader of approximately equivalent status. Probably, Cortés composed this description of the entry into Tenochtitlán[58] to show Charles V how respected he was and how well he represented the emperor.

The narrative of the meeting between Cortés and Montezuma at the palace prepared for the *conquistador* has become a hotly disputed piece of rhetoric. Cortés staged a speech in which Montezuma stated that his people were foreigners in that land, that the lord who had brought them there came back later, and asked them to return home. However, the lord's request had been rejected and his authority denied. Yet, his people knew that one day the descendents of that lord would return to conquer the land and make them vassals. He, Montezuma, believed that Cortés was the representative of their natural lord, whom he agreed to obey faithfully. He indicated that the main signs were the 'fact' that Cortés knew of their existence and that he came from the direction where the sun rose. Then Montezuma tried to convince Cortés of his

[58] The narrative in Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, ed. Luis Sáinz de Medrano (Barcelona: Planeta, 1992), ch. 88, pp. 251–2, reveals the presence of Doña Marina (Malinche) as Cortés's translator and makes the greeting ceremony less personal.

good will, denying the rumours spread by his enemies that he believed he was a god and lived in a golden palace. Although it would have been difficult for Cortés to invent every piece of the narrative, it is undeniable that this legend became instrumental in his strategy to convince Charles V of his acceptance by the Mexica ruler, and also in his strategy to provoke discontent among natives against Montezuma, who supposedly confessed a doubtful legitimacy. As Anthony Pagden has pointed out, it is extremely unlikely that Montezuma ever raised his clothing and showed his body, grasping his arms and trunk and saying 'see that I am flesh and blood like you and all other men, and I am mortal and substantial'.[59]

In fact, Cortés acted as the new ruler. Exploiting old news about two Spaniards killed at Nautla (renamed Almería) by a local lord, he demanded that Montezuma arrest this vassal and those responsible for their deaths (already avenged by Castilian troops from Vera Cruz, who completely destroyed the city). Montezuma complied, sending troops to imprison local leaders and bring them back. As a guarantee, Cortés imposed the *Uei Tlatoani*'s detention in the palace which the Spaniards occupied. The local leaders (Qualpopoca, his son, and fifteen other people) were handed over to Cortés, who interrogated and then burned them in the main square, an act which astonished the natives. The fact that this occurred without public unrest expressed Cortés's total control. Under torture, the accused finally confessed Montezuma's involvement in the plot against the Spaniards, justifying Cortés's close control over the *Uei Tlatoani*, who became a prisoner and puppet of the *conquistador*.

Thus, a collective public execution became a founding moment defining a transfer of real power. Cortés had a strong sense of the impact of rituals and used them effectively. His next step, he reported to Charles V, was to announce 'publicly to all the natives, the chiefs as well as those who came to see me, that it was Your Majesty's wish that Mutezuma remain in power, acknowledging the sovereignty which Your Highness held over him, and that they could best serve Your Highness by obeying him and holding him for their lord, as they had

[59] *Letters from Mexico*, p. 86, and Pagden's comments, pp. 467–9.

done before I came to this land'.[60] Reinstating Montezuma's power through the will of (and dependency on) the foreign conquerors, in front of his own people, was the crowning piece in the process of deconsecrating and demoralising the ruler of Mexica. Afterwards, not only were the peripheries of the Mexica confederacy in open rebellion, but the centre itself had been disrupted.

This *relación* reflected a difficult and unsustainable coexistence between the two powers in Tenochtitlán. Formal power (and daily administration) remained with Montezuma, but Cortés acted as a representative of his suzerain. The letter demonstrates how Cortés tried to extend these boundaries back, demanding more and more from Montezuma, who strangely complied with all these requests: expeditions to the gold fields, including Spaniards who collected samples; mapping every river and cove along the coast, a task carried out by native cartographers; Spanish expeditions to explore different provinces, searching for places to establish cities; and suppressing a revolt (the first against both Cortés and Montezuma) in the province of Alcolhuacán. After imprisoning this rebellious lord, Montezuma summoned an assembly of every lord in the Aztec confederacy. This produced a second piece of contested rhetoric, in which he supposedly transferred power explicitly to Cortés by asking his vassals to obey him.[61] Immediately after this ceremony, Cortés demanded (still through Montezuma) that every lord pay a tribute to Charles V in gold, silver, jewellery, precious stones and featherwork. Spanish pressure extended to include religion when Cortés asked Montezuma to abolish idolatry and adopt the Christian faith. He received another fantastic answer: that Spaniards might well know best, having recently arrived from the original land, while they (the Mexica) were not natives and might have lost the purity of faith.[62] 'Idols' were then removed and sacrifices forbidden, introducing major disorder in local practices and beliefs.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 98–9. Montezuma supposedly reproduced the same legend about the return of the first lord.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

This strange cohabitation lasted almost six months, from November 1519 to May 1520. It was disrupted only by the arrival of Panfilo de Narvaez's expedition to the coast, containing eighteen ships carrying over 800 well-armed men. Narvaez, representing the governor of Cuba, claimed to be the legitimate lieutenant-general and demanded that Cortés surrender as a rebel. In his letter to Charles V, Cortés explained the perils of this internal conflict between Spaniards in a country already subjugated to the emperor, with its ruler captured and its gold and jewels collected and awaiting shipment to Spain. He reported a first breakdown in this peace, claiming that rebellious Indians in coastal places such as Cempoal were taking Narvaez's side. With a typical manipulation of events, Cortés accused Narvaez of negotiating the detention of the Spaniards with Montezuma, so that he, Narvaez, could leave the land afterwards. After an unsuccessful exchange of emissaries, Cortés had to abandon Tenochtitlán and face his internal enemies. He started by contesting Narvaez's legitimacy, accusing him of lacking a royal decree to impose a transfer of power. Cortés further accused Narvaez of usurpation, treason and rebellion against the emperor, and commanded the newly arrived men to abandon such a commander. Finally, he managed to surprise Narvaez in his own camp and capture him, causing the troops to switch their allegiance.[63] This proved crucial, because the revolt had spread; although Cortés did not report the massacre of native noblemen perpetrated by Pedro de Alvarado in Tenochtitlán during the *Toxcatl* feast, which triggered it, the Spaniards in Tenochtitlán had been attacked and were now under siege. However, the entrance of Cortés and his men into the city did not solve the problem: it seemed as if the Mexica waited for his return to launch a major offensive and annihilate them all.

This time, Cortés's combination of resistance and diplomacy was ineffective, and his usual resource (Montezuma) received a blow to his head from a stone while trying to appease his people from the rooftop of a fortified palace. He died from the injury three days later. The event symbolised Montezuma's downfall and renewed political resistance from the Mexica. The Spaniards and their allies (3,000 Indians from

[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 115–27.

Tlaxcala) were now in a desperate situation, short of water and food, without their local intermediaries and facing determined resistance from a united people using new weapons, very long lances with flint heads. Eventually, the Spaniards withdrew, carrying the gold and jewels they had collected and believing that the captured provincial chiefs whom they had taken hostage would protect them. They tried to retreat as secretly as possible, leaving by night around the end of June 1520, but encountered fierce attacks from the alert Mexica, who harassed them relentlessly from inside the city to the borders of their state. Cortés and the majority of the Spaniards were lucky to survive, though all were wounded and exhausted. Their losses in the *noche triste* were severe: according to Cortés, who understated them to avoid suggesting they had suffered an irreversible defeat, 150 Spaniards, 2,000 Tlaxcala Indians, nearly all the hostages and 45 horses had been killed, while the Mexica had recovered almost all their treasure. Cortés noted also that many Spaniards had been killed in the provinces as a consequence of the revolt.

The final part of his second letter reported that the survivors found refuge at Tlaxcala, where they renewed their alliance with the natives, treated their wounds and restored their aggressive military will. Cortés understood the psychological aspect of war very well. He rejected a proposal to withdraw to Vera Cruz and rebuild their strength before launching another attack against the Mexica, foreseeing that further retreat would simply encourage the Mexica to launch another massive attack against the weakened Spaniards. Moreover, Cortés was also running out of time: Narvaez's expedition had been a major threat, and he could establish his position in the emperor's eyes only through a major conquest. Therefore Cortés returned to the offensive within two months of his defeat, in order to show that the Spaniards were not intimidated and to disrupt the fragile unity of the Mexica confederacy. Helped by native allies, he managed to subjugate the province of Tepeaca, near Tlaxcala, where he created a new town, Segura de la Frontera, and appointed all its officials. Then he accepted an alliance with Huaquechula (the future town of Puebla), which wanted to expel a garrison of 30,000 Mexica that had recently arrived to block the Spaniards' way. Victory there brought a new wave of native allies;

Cortés reported 120,000. By now, Cortés had received declarations of vassalage from several towns and provinces including Oaxaca, again tipping the balance of power in the Spaniards' favour.

Cortés adopted an intelligent strategy, securing his lines of communication to the coast and cutting any support to the Mexica from the eastern provinces. Meanwhile, he also sent several expeditions to Hispaniola (and even Cuba) to recruit men and buy equipment, integrating new reinforcements that arrived at the coast. His letter ended on a very optimistic note, guaranteeing the emperor that he would conquer Tenochtitlán and recover everything he had lost. Cortés even informed Charles V that he had begun building thirteen brigantines to fight Tenochtitlán from the lake. By April 1522 this letter was printed in Seville, with a postscript by the printer, Cromberger, stating that 'after this, there came on the first of . . . March past news from New Spain, of how the Spaniards had taken by storm the great city of Temixtitan [Tenochtitlán], in which more Indians died than Jews in Jerusalem during the destruction of that city by Vespasian'.[64]

The third letter was dated 15 May 1522, more than eighteen months after the previous *relación*. Cortés reported that smallpox had spread into the new continent before the Spaniards had started to besiege Tenochtitlán. This epidemic surely had a devastating effect on the native population, as sudden high mortality weakened their defence against the *conquistadores*. By Christmas 1520, the Spanish had assembled forty horsemen and 550 foot soldiers, including eighty crossbowmen and *harquebusiers*, at Tlaxcala, together with eight or nine field guns (cannons), but very little powder. Cortés made a speech recalling the causes of this war: the revolt by vassals of Emperor Charles V; subjugating a barbarian people in order to spread the faith; service to their king; protecting their own lives and the support they had received from the allied natives.[65]

Cortes's troops immediately entered the territory of the Nahua confederation, where they occupied Texcoco, the second most powerful city in the Triple Alliance, a place capable of billeting and supplying his troops. Avoiding an immediate attack on Tenochtitlán, Cortés

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 159. [65] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

patiently devoted the next four months to encircling it by taking control of all the cities around the lake through battles or diplomacy. This tactic enabled him to know the region, impose alliances and gather information for an expected siege of Tenochtitlán. His thirteen brigantines were carried in disassembled form from Tlaxcala to Texcoco in a huge expedition several kilometres long, guarded by 200 Spaniards and 8,000 Tlaxcala Indians. As they were assembled, more reinforcements came from Vera Cruz in three ships loaded with men, horses, crossbows, harquebuses and powder.

Thousands of allied troops had assisted the Spaniards since the beginning of the campaign, but at the end of April 1521, Cortés sent messengers to all his allies asking them for full military support. The Tlaxcala Indians alone provided more than 50,000 men, divided between two companies of Spanish troops based at Tlacopán (later named Tacuba) and Coyouacán and commanded by Pedro de Alvarado and Cristóbal de Olid. A third company of Spaniards, commanded by Gonzalo de Sandoval and supported by 30,000 Indians from Chalco, Guaxocingo and Churultecal, would support the thirteen brigantines commanded by Cortés himself. The siege started at the end of May by cutting the fresh water supply from the aqueducts to the city. Warfare began with the arrival of the brigantines, launched via a new canal dug by the allies. The successful encirclement of the city and the victory of the brigantines against hundreds of Mexica canoes set a pattern for the following months: the Mexica entrenched themselves in the island-city of Tenochtitlán, barricaded all the land routes and defended them every day, breaking the causeways to prevent men and horses from advancing.

After two and a half months of constant fighting and killing, the siege ended on 13 August 1521. Expecting a quick surrender, the Spaniards and their allies had exerted permanent military pressure on the Mexica, entering the city every day along different paths, fighting to control the bridges and squeeze the defenders into ever-smaller territory. They razed houses to avoid attacks from the terraces, and restored the broken causeways to secure their safe return to the mainland. But they were facing a resilient people who had decided to die rather than surrender their autonomy. Cortés's *relación* included details of the daily fighting,

not only to underline how difficult this enterprise was and praise the actions of his men and allies, but also to emphasise his vision as both military commander and diplomat – reacting to adversity, trying new tactics, fostering dissent among the enemy, and increasing the number of allies. For example, he boasted that D. Fernando, a young noble Mexica under Spanish control, who had been baptised and imposed as lord of Texcoco during the first military operations around the lake, had managed to send 50,000 men from the province of Alcolhuacán to assist the Spanish troops at the very beginning of the siege. This act raised the number of allied troops to the impressive total of some 130,000 men at the first stage of the siege. Even fighting against probably 250,000 people barricaded inside the city[66] (the *relaciones* indicated that many noble Mexica and warriors had abandoned some cities from the Triple Alliance to the Spaniards and concentrated on defending Tenochtitlán), its conquest clearly resulted from dissent among the natives, caused or manipulated by the Spaniards.

The number of people involved in the war fluctuated. When the Mexica managed to defeat the first serious attempt to capture the city's strategic marketplace, killing a significant number of Spaniards and allied troops, native support for the Spaniards dwindled and revolts broke out. Cortés had to renew his diplomatic and military efforts in the provinces, securing his rearguard before returning to the intense fight at Tenochtitlán.[67] In the last stage of the siege, the presence of allied troops intensified; natives from different provinces came to witness the fall of the Mexica rulers and participate in taking booty, developments that Cortés could not control. He even denounced the savage treatment of Tenochtitlán's defenders, accusing his allies of systematic cannibalism. He reported the killing of tens of thousands of Mexica in the final days of the siege, with the city's defenders

[66] Referring to previous estimates by Jean Delumeau and José Luis de Rojas, Serge Gruzinski calculates 300,000 people in Tenochtitlán before the conquest: *Histoire de Mexico* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 189. This figure would place the city among the largest in the world, well ahead of Constantinople or Paris. The first wave of epidemics must have decreased this number, while warfare must have imposed contradictory movements, with some people fleeing to the countryside and others coming to the city to fight the enemy.

[67] *Letters from Mexico*, pp. 237–47.

completely exhausted by starvation and epidemics. Such events explain his dense description of the siege: Cortés wished to justify destroying the city and his ultimate inability to recover the royal treasure. He claimed to have tried repeatedly to negotiate an honourable surrender in order to preserve the city and avoid more deaths (a natural attitude of the image of a rational leader that he was trying to present to the emperor), but the *Tlatoani* never agreed to talk to him. This letter clearly demonstrates the view adopted by the Mexica political elite following Montezuma's submission to the Spaniards: honour required either victory or death.

This *relación* should have stopped with the city's conquest, but Cortés continued. First he reported receiving news about the 'Southern Sea' (later called the Pacific Ocean), and immediately sent missions to reconnoitre the south-western portions of the territories he had just conquered. One conquest opened new horizons, leading to further exploration projects and potential conquests. We will see that Cortés never abandoned such projects, launching several expeditions that would eventually produce Spanish colonisation of the Philippines forty years later, after they had mastered the system of winds and currents in the Pacific and established a permanent link between Mexico and the Far East, namely the famous annual galleon, laden with silver, that sailed from Acapulco to Manila. Cortés also informed Charles V of his decision to rebuild Tenochtitlán: 'as before it was capital and centre of all these provinces, so it shall be henceforth'.[68] Cortés's third *relación* also mentioned the military missions sent to pacify different provinces and impose Spanish rule. Cortés used precisely this issue, a recently conquered land at permanent risk of unrest and rebellion, to dismiss Cristóbal de Tapia, head of the mint in Hispaniola, who had arrived after the conquest at Vera Cruz to claim control of the government on behalf of Charles V. Facing opposition from the municipal councils (again manipulated by Cortés, who had recently created a new one in Medellín), Tapia was forced to return to Hispaniola, on the pretext that 'his arrival caused much upheaval and his presence would have caused great harm, if God had not remedied it'.[69]

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 270. [69] *Ibid.*, pp. 272–5.

Cortés briefly recorded a plot against him, organised in Texcoco by Diego Velázquez's faction before the siege of Tenochtitlán, and how he executed its leader, Antonio de Villafaña, but spared the lives of the other conspirators. Since the king rarely delegated the right to condemn men to death, Cortés was in a particularly delicate position, but he had proceeded regardless, as if his was the only authority capable of maintaining order: 'without punishing those men, there is complete peace and tranquillity; but if I hear anything further, I will punish them as justice demands'.[70]

This letter concluded with his reflection on the status of the natives, who could not be enslaved like those in the islands, because 'the natives of these parts are of much greater intelligence . . .; indeed, they appeared to us to possess such understanding as is sufficient for an ordinary citizen to conduct himself in a civilised country'.[71] This reasoning allowed Cortés to justify (and request royal approval for) the system of *encomiendas* he created in Mexico immediately after the conquest. Dividing the natives among the Spanish settlers gave the *conquistadores* an immediate reward; but it also created endless problems of oppression and consequent unrest, which royal officials struggled to redress after a regular administration was established in Mexico. The way in which (to use Cortés's words) the *conquistadores* became settlers, justifying his new seigniorial institution by the need to control the Indians and to colonise the territory, seems particularly noteworthy.

The fourth letter was written on 15 October 1524, almost thirty months after the previous one. In the interval, Cortés had been finally invested as the official governor and captain-general of New Spain in a decree dated October 1522, which reached Mexico only in September

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 279. Here the English translation is misleading; the term 'citizen' had a different meaning, and the expression 'civilised country' was unknown in those days: see Norbert Elias, *La civilisation des mœurs*, trans. Pierre Kamnitze (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1973) and Lucien Febvre, *Pour une histoire à part entière* (Paris: Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1962), pp. 477–603. The original (Delgado Gomez (ed.), *Cartas*, p. 450) reads: 'los naturales destas partes eran de mucha más capacidad que no los de las otras islas; que nos parescían de tanto entendimiento y razón quanto a uno medianamente basta para ser capaz'.

1523. Whereas Cortés's first three letters to Spain justified his military actions and diplomatic manoeuvres to conquer territory in Mexico in order to persuade his sovereign to recognise his status, his last two recorded the *conquistador*'s efforts to maintain or extend his power against royal bureaucrats attempting to transform his charismatic leadership into a standard administration controlled from Europe. In fact, Cortés's appointment as governor had been accompanied by another decree appointing four officials (who arrived in Mexico in 1524) to assist him. In hindsight, Cortés's appointment was a brilliant way to appease this charismatic leader and his *conquistadores*, now seen as founding settlers and still controlling local power networks in the new colonial world. Yet it simultaneously ended Cortés's arbitrary and uncontrolled leadership, because all governmental actions were henceforth scrutinised by royal officials. As John Elliott suggested, this sudden and dramatic reduction in his autonomy may explain the bitterness of Cortés's last letters and his decision to lead an expedition to Honduras in person, or to travel to Spain to present his case to the emperor.

It is important here to analyse these last two letters, which historians have generally ignored. Cortés described new military missions to 'pacify' different provinces which had 'revolted' alongside Tenochtitlán and ensure loyalty to the new rulers, to found new settlements (Espíritu Santo, Zacatula) or transfer old ones like Segura de la Frontera and Medellín. Spanish military activity during these two years after the conquest of Tenochtitlán allowed them to expand well beyond the territories loosely controlled by the Triple Alliance. The struggle between Cortés and Bishop Fonseca, the counsellor responsible for affairs in the Indies, also became explicit in this letter. Cortés decided upon an open attack on Fonseca, under the pretext of letters seized by his men from the bishop's envoy, showing support for Cristóbal de Tapia. Those letters threatened Cortés and his *conquistadores*, and he claimed that they had provoked disturbances among both Spaniards and Indians. Cortés complained that the lack of recognition for his men's services made them wish to form a *comunidad* 'as had been done in Castile'; this reference to the *Comuneros* revolt of 1520–1 demonstrated how well Cortés was informed about political events

in Spain. He also criticised the systematic persecution of his men at the *Casa de Contratación* in Seville on orders from Bishop Fonseca, causing money, reports and letters to be seized and blocking urgently needed reinforcements of soldiers, men and supplies.

Deciding to take personal command of an expedition to 'pacify' the province of Pánuco (targeted by the *adelantado* Francisco de Garay), the governor also founded the town of Santisteban del Puerto. This was a crucial move, because when a letter arrived from the emperor, commanding Garay not to interfere in that river or in any other places settled by Cortés, the *alcalde* of Santisteban played a major role in controlling the expedition's fate. Finding himself deserted by his soldiers and with badly maintained ships, Garay had to travel to Mexico to beg Cortés for assistance. He died in suspicious circumstances, vomiting all night after a dinner with the governor; but the latter's report claimed that news of his men's revolt in Pánuco province had major effects on the *adelantado*, who felt guilty and fell 'ill from his grief and from this sickness passed from this life within the space of three days'.[72] The letter continued by describing the pacification of the province, although Garay's remaining men were killed by 'rebellious' Indians. The complete failure of Garay's actions suited Cortés perfectly, because it provided an example that prevented further threats to his projects from developing in the region. Since the beginning, Cortés had understood that settlement was the key element in securing possession of the land and claiming political control. This explains why he sent out new expeditions commanded by Cristóbal de Olid and Pedro de Alvarado to explore the coast, although later in the same letter Cortés complained about Olid, who (encouraged by Diego Velázquez) had apparently rebelled in Honduras. In one of the rare cases when Cortés lost control of his emotions, he wrote: 'if this is so, then I am of a mind to send for the aforementioned Diego Velázquez and arrest him, and send him to Your Majesty'.[73]

The final part of the letter dealt with the reconstruction of Tenochtitlán (later called Mexico), specifically building a Spanish neighbourhood protected by a new solid fortress and canals,

[72] *Letters from Mexico*, p. 310. [73] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

organising separate native neighbourhoods, and reviving markets and commerce. Cortés next informed Charles V about the discovery of copper, tin, saltpetre and sulphur in the provinces, which could now produce cannons and powder. He also reported on his projects to explore the coasts of America in both the northern and southern seas (Atlantic and Pacific), and to discover a better passage than that used by Magellan – and perhaps establish a connection between New Spain and the Spice Islands reported by Magellan's expedition. As a result of the presence of royal officials, the governor complained about spending all his own money on different military expeditions, plus borrowing from the royal treasury and indebting himself to merchants. Consequently, Cortés asked to be reimbursed with 50,000 *pesos de oro*. The governor also wrote extensively about the need for men of religion, Franciscans and Dominicans, openly declaring that he did not want bishops, accusing them of 'squandering the goods of the Church on pomp and ceremony, and other vices, and leaving entailed estates to their sons or kinsmen'. Cortés developed this delicate topic without mincing words: 'The evil here would be still greater, for the natives of these parts had in their time religious persons administering their rites and ceremonies who were so severe in the observance of both chastity and honesty that if any one of them was held by anyone to have transgressed, he was put to death.'[74] Cortés suggested that Charles V ask the pope for the privilege of collecting tithes, even estimating the amount of money involved. The letter concluded with more accusations against the officials of Hispaniola, who had forbidden the export of breeding animals to New Spain. He wanted their decision revoked, and emphasised the importance of sending breeding animals and plants for the 'colonisation' (he used the word several times) of New Spain.

His fifth letter, dated 3 September 1526, is the most tedious. Cortés reported extensively on his overland journey to Honduras from the Tabasco region through the swampy regions of Yucatán to Nito (nowadays in Guatemala), crossing over 800 kilometres under the worst possible conditions simply to defeat the rebel Cristóbal de Olid. When

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 333.

Cortés arrived on the coast of Honduras, he found two towns and heard of another one created by surviving Spaniards from previous expeditions. He went there to acquire information about Olid's rebellion and his struggle with Francisco de las Casas (sent previously by Cortés), which ended with Olid's execution. While there, he received news about feuds in Mexico between his followers and the royal officials, who, believing he was dead, had seized power, looted Cortés's properties and arrested the leaders of the governor's faction. The letter informed the emperor of various groups of rebellious Spaniards plundering the coast and enslaving the natives, provoking constant unrest and revolt. Cortés finally decided to sail back to New Spain and re-establish order in Tenochtitlán, stopping over in Havana and landing at Medellín.

Cortés recorded his reception and the journey to Tenochtitlán as a triumph, with all the Spaniards and natives crowding the roads and the towns, especially in the capital. It is plausible that this triumph had been organised by his followers, who had regained power in the capital as soon as they learned that the governor was alive and sailing back. But the sweet taste of his restored authority did not last long: soon he received a dispatch from Medellín, informing him that an investigative judge sent by Charles V had arrived with instructions to examine all of Cortés's official activities. The controls imported by the royal bureaucracy became annoyingly restrictive, and Cortés must have realised that he would never enjoy the same autonomy as before being appointed governor.

This judge, Ponce de León, was received by Cortés and the municipal council of Tenochtitlán, who accepted the emperor's letters and swore to implement them. Ponce de León announced the inquiry and suspended Cortés from his functions, but soon died. Cortés informed the emperor that the judge and thirty of his companions had died, suggesting an epidemic, but a rumour spread that Ponce de León had been poisoned. The judge had transferred his powers to Marcos de Aguilar, his *alcalde mayor*, who suspended the inquiry. Despite pressure from the municipal council, Cortés refused to resume power, awaiting further decisions from the emperor. Cortés devoted the rest of his letter to justifying his financial debts, claiming that if he had the 200 million

that his enemies said he had taken from the provinces, he would offer them to the emperor in exchange for 20 million and a place at court to advise him on affairs in the Indies. In conclusion, he informed the emperor about his new projects of expansion, namely into Florida, and the launch of new expeditions to the Southern Sea (which he really did). This last point is very interesting, as he compared New Spain with the *Estado da Índia* in terms that became a topic of debate among historians:

> I will undertake to discover a route to the Spice Islands and many others, if there be any between Maluco, Malaca and China, and so arrange matters that the spices shall no longer be obtained by trade, as the king of Portugal has them now, but as Your Majesty's rightful property; and the natives of those islands shall serve and recognise Your Highness as their rightful king and lord.[75]

Despite the bitterness of these last two letters, which revealed Cortés's disappointment at seeing power slip from his hands after finally obtaining Charles V's recognition, it is indisputable that this *conquistador* managed to achieve much more than his contemporaries – even Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the *Gran Capitán*, who reconquered the kingdom of Naples for Fernando of Aragon, or Francisco Pizarro, who conquered the Inca Empire. When Cortés decided to present his case directly to the emperor, travelling to Castile in 1528, he was received with great pomp by Charles V, who elevated him to the status of marquis and recognised his vast domains in the finest lands of New Spain, including his patronage of dozens of thousands of native people. At the same time, a *Real Audiencia* (royal high court) was established in Mexico, which meant continuing the previous policy of simultaneously raising his status while withdrawing effective political power. Cortés never recovered his authority as governor after being suspended by the inquiry (*residencia*) in 1526.

In 1535, Charles V appointed Antonio de Mendoza as the first viceroy of Mexico and head of the *Real Audiencia*, concluding eleven years of brilliant political manoeuvring to transform a charismatic leadership into ordinary hierarchical administration. Cortés retained the titles of captain-general (recovered only by the second viceroy,

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 445.

appointed after the *conquistador*'s death) and *adelantado* of the Southern Sea, which reserved to him the right to explore the Pacific Ocean. He organised several voyages to identify the western coasts of America, tried to establish a regular link between America and Asia, and created the first shipyards in the New World.[76] However, as captain-general, Cortés remained subordinate to the viceroy and could take no initiative without permission from Antonio de Mendoza.[77]

Throughout the 1530s, Cortés sent a series of protests and memorials railing against what he considered to be insufficient recognition of his services. Even so, his voyage to Castile enabled him to enter the exclusive world of grandees, with one of the highest noble titles and certainly the best properties,[78] to remarry into that tiny exclusive group and definitively raise his status. Cortés offered one of the most impressive cases of social climbing through military service in Renaissance Europe, particularly from a man who began as an undistinguished local squire. He gained not only political legitimacy, but also the highest social recognition imaginable. Political power could not be held indefinitely, as he knew full well despite his protests. He was wise enough to avoid pushing these protests too far, never crossing the line of unbreakable loyalty that would have meant ruin, as later happened to Gonzalo Pizarro in Peru. In comparison, Afonso de Albuquerque, who came from a much higher social background, did not raise his status to the same extent. As we have seen, the descendants of his 'clan' of relatives benefited from Albuquerque's charisma and the memory of the man who founded the *Estado da Índia*; many of them were appointed captains, governors and viceroys, competing for most of the senior posts in India with the descendants of Vasco da Gama's 'clan'. Yet Afonso de Albuquerque never managed to establish

[76] Miguel León-Portilla, *Hernán Cortés y la Mar del Sur* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispanica, 1985).

[77] J. Ignacio Rubio Mañé, *El Virreinato*, vol. 1: *Orígenes y jurisdicciones, y dinamica social de los virreyes*, 2nd edition (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1983), pp. 19–26.

[78] Bernardo Garcia Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle: tres siglos de régimen señorial en Nueva España* (Mexico: Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1969).

a new noble house, and, as he explicitly regretted in his last letters, he had failed to become a grandee.

COMPARISONS

An abyss separates the sets of letters from Cortés and Albuquerque: they differ in number, length, content, style and form. To begin with, Albuquerque's letters were printed only in the nineteenth century. Even if some chroniclers indicated he was 'literate' and understood Latin, he never intended to publish them. Portuguese publishing habits had been quite centralised since the beginning of printing. Many texts about Portuguese overseas expansion were published in Europe; but most of them were propaganda tools, either letters written by the Portuguese king or 'obedience speeches'[79] by Portuguese ambassadors to the pope. In 1507, Fracanzano da Montalboldo published *Paesi nouamente retrouati*,[80] a collection of travel accounts concerning the explorations of Ca' da Mosto, Pedro de Sintra, Columbus, Pinzón, Vasco da Gama, Pedro Álvares Cabral and Amerigo Vespucci, together with letters from Italian merchants, diplomats, and an interview in Rome with a Nestorian priest from Cranganore in India known as 'José Indiano'. Although Portuguese travel accounts circulated and were printed abroad, mainly in Italy, there are no known examples of such travellers publishing their own explorations and conquests.[81]

In Spain, a precedent existed for Cortés's publication of his actions: the letter written by Columbus to Luís de Santángel about his first voyage to the Caribbean islands, printed immediately in Barcelona in April 1493. This became widely diffused throughout Europe: the fifteenth century alone saw nine Latin editions in Barcelona, Antwerp,

[79] *Orações de obediência dos reis de Portugal aos Sumos Pontífices*, ed. Martim de Albuquerque, trans. Miguel Pinto de Meneses, 10 vols. (Lisbon: Inapa, 1988).

[80] See *Itinerarium Portugallensium*, ed. Luís de Matos (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1992) for a Latin version of the *Paesi nouamente retrouati*, which saw six editions in Italian, plus several Latin, German and French translations.

[81] Luís de Matos, *L'expansion portugaise dans la littérature latine de la Renaissance* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991); António Alberto Banha de Andrade, *Mundos novos do mundo: panorama da difusão pela Europa de notícias dos descobrimentos portugueses*, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1972).

Basel and Paris, plus four Italian editions in Rome and Florence, and one German edition in Strasbourg.[82] But as a modern example of propaganda and political persuasion, the context, scope and literary skills of Columbus's letter were very far removed from Cortés's *relaciones*.

The two conquerors had totally different political agendas. Albuquerque had been appointed captain and then governor by the king, while Cortés had cut his ties to his patron, the governor of Cuba, to engage in an autonomous project of conquest, for which he needed his sovereign's recognition. Since nobody knew him in Spain, the publication of Cortés's letters provided a way to make him visible, help build his reputation (again demonstrating the importance of public opinion), and put pressure on the royal court to recognise him as captain-general (and then governor) of the new Spanish dominions in Mexico. When the emperor finally brought the situation in New Spain under control, he forbade further printing of Cortés's letters. In contrast, Albuquerque had no interest in making public his disagreements with a king, with whom he always maintained a close relationship, although inevitably eroded over time by the dynamics of political interests. Albuquerque knew that the entire Portuguese power game was confined to a tiny but sharply divided and conflict-ridden royal court. While he struggled for political support, Cortés struggled for political legitimacy.

For such reasons, the style of these two sets of correspondence also differs greatly. Cortés developed a dual register, combining in-depth description of the geography, religion, politics, ethnography and economics of lands that were unknown in Europe with juridical arguments justifying his actions to Charles V. The contents of Albuquerque's letters were more diversified, often dealing with administrative and political matters. However, they shared some common aspects. In describing the Red Sea, then scarcely known in Europe, Albuquerque provided a very detailed description similar to Cortés's written images of Mexico. Likewise, when reporting on his diplomatic efforts or military actions, Albuquerque could become almost as detailed as Cortés.

[82] Christopher Columbus, *Textos y documentos completos*, ed. Consuelo Varela and Juan Gil, 2nd edition (Madrid: Alianza, 1992), pp. 219–26.

On the other hand, Albuquerque's style was generally much more concise than Cortés's, perhaps because he was writing dozens of letters every year. This enabled him to tackle separate issues in each letter, while Cortés preferred to concentrate all his information in long reports sent every year or eighteen months, whose timing was generally defined by his immediate situation.

They used different strategies of persuasion. Albuquerque was building on territory that had been discussed at the royal court for ten years, while Cortés had to convince the emperor to legitimise his conquests in a completely unknown land, about which he himself was providing all the information. Albuquerque tried to persuade his king through his actions, but also through his vision of the future Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean, while Cortés never doubted that conquest was the only possible argument to establish his position. Albuquerque engaged in a debate on strategy; Cortés tried to persuade the emperor that he had personally won the trust of local allies, which was essential for the undertaking's success, so that there was no alternative to him. Albuquerque was engaged in a real exchange with the king, and their vivid correspondence covered a huge variety of subjects, while Cortés was producing long reports, making Charles V a recipient of unilateral information who was expected to approve the actions described.

The letters (and actions) of the founders of the two Iberian overseas dominions raised most of the political issues about European imperialism that (leaving aside Greek and Roman expansion) would be discussed for at least the next hundred years. For Cortés, the questions at stake in his policies of distributing *encomiendas* of natives (and the corresponding income) among the *conquistadores* and of separating Spanish and native municipal councils were how to recognise native political rights and native jurisdiction. The invasion of Mexico raised crucial issues about the respective rights of conquerors and conquered people, namely defining a legal basis for Europeans to override legitimate local powers, distribute land and assign native people to new overlords. This situation led to Bartolomé de las Casas's reaction: he condemned the invasion and held that the natives had a right to maintain their property, culture and political system. He influenced

Francisco de Vitoria and the Salamanca school (Domingo de Soto, Luís de Molina and Francisco Suárez) who supported recognition of native rights and refined the notion of a just war – two crucial issues for the development of *jus gentium*, a domain of juridical theory placed between natural law and human law, considering the whole world as a commonwealth.[83]

In contrast, Albuquerque created a state in India with a specific blend of Portuguese and local institutions which defined its political environment for the following centuries. During the sixteenth century, the *Estado da Índia* became a loose network of ports and small coastal territories, obtained through invasion, military threat and diplomatic negotiation, and which integrated some local institutions and even local rulers. This relatively hybrid result suited the highly complex urban and commercial societies encountered by the Portuguese, which defined a completely different set of possibilities and imposed constant compromise. Like Cortés, Albuquerque enjoyed wide autonomy that allowed both men to distribute jobs and rents among their soldiers; develop a policy of intermarriage (criticised by the king), in order to encourage settlers and produce a new mixed-race elite to provide the necessary manpower and access to local resources; and sustain a constant and intense diplomatic policy to extend their ruler's overseas presence. Unlike Cortés, from the very start Albuquerque enjoyed a formal and official link to his king, which simultaneously limited his autonomy. He knew that he might have to face an inquiry, and was acutely aware of the rule of replacement after a three-year term, although he did his best to keep the post as long as possible.

Since the start of Portuguese expansion in the Indian Ocean, governors tried to impose a policy of maritime monopoly, in which ships needed Portuguese authorisation for trade. Albuquerque managed to implement this policy, which remained relatively successful

[83] Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Obra indígenista*, ed. José Alcina Franch (Madrid: Alianza, 1985); *Brevissima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, ed. José Maria Reyes Cano (Barcelona: Planeta, 1994); Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*, ed. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For a general approach, see Demetrio Ramos et al., *Francisco de Vitoria y la escuela de Salamanca: la etica en la conquista de América* (Madrid: CSIC, 1984).

until the 1570s. This practice raised difficulties in international law, since Spaniards and Portuguese alike claimed that oceans should be reserved for their exclusive navigation according to the papal division of the world between the two kingdoms, redefined by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494).[84] Constant protests by the French kings (especially François I) against this shared monopoly influenced a first wave of juridical opinions about freedom of navigation, reflected in the Latin and French translations of Girolamo Benzoni's *Historia del Mondo Nuovo*.[85] The issue resurfaced after Dutch ships started sailing to India, when the shareholders of the *Verenigde Oost-Indisches Compagnie* wanted to know if the capture and booty of Portuguese ships was legally acceptable. Opposing the Portuguese version, young Hugo Grotius argued brilliantly in favour of *mare liberum* and the legitimacy of defensive and offensive action to reinforce the principle of free navigation.[86]

Albuquerque and Cortés shared the same political and military knowledge. They had obviously studied recent technological and tactical developments in the art of war at Granada (between Castilians and Muslims) and Naples (between Spaniards and French). Artillery proved very important not only in sieges of fortresses and cities, but also in naval warfare, particularly when used by Portuguese fleets in India. In Mexico, artillery had a major psychological impact, while in Asia the Portuguese faced Turkish competition around the same technological level, which quickly spread to other states. In Mexico, the Spaniards could exploit their cavalry superiority: horses were unknown to the native peoples, and their use proved crucial on the battlefield. The complementary deployment of military and diplomatic action, which had proved so important in stirring up dissidence and demoralisation during the war in Granada, became equally decisive in

[84] Julio Valdeón Baruque (ed.), *El Testamento de Adán*, exhibition catalogue (Lisbon and León: Sociedad V Centenario del Tratado de Tordesillas/CNCDP, 1994).

[85] Girolamo Benzoni, *La historia del Mondo Nuovo* (Venice: F. Rampazetto, 1565); *Novi Orbis Historia*, trans. Urbain Chauveton (Lyon: E. Vignon, 1578); *Histoire nouvelle du Nouveau Monde*, trans. Urbain Chauveton (Geneva: E. Vignon, 1579). This last version profoundly influenced the fourth part of *America*, with the engravings by Théodore de Bry (Frankfurt a.M.: J. Feirabend, 1594).

[86] Hugo Grotius, *The Free Sea*, trans. Richard Hakluyt with William Welwood's *Critique* and Grotius's *Reply*, ed. David Armitage (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004).

Mexico and in India. The capacity to cope with defeat and to rebuild military strength, exhibited in Naples by the *Gran Capitán*, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba,[87] became a source of inspiration for both Albuquerque and Cortés. The guerrilla tactics developed in Granada and the technological improvements from Naples also provided sources of inspiration when building brigantines in Mexico or using different types of ships in India. The spread of crossbows, harquebuses and pikes also explains European military technological superiority on the battlefield in Mexico – important from a psychological point of view, but less crucial than the capacity to create unrest and to mobilise native enemies of the Triple Alliance.

As we have seen, Cortés's political correspondence made explicit comparisons between the two Iberian empires. His contrast between Spanish territorial expansion and Portuguese naval expansion, between an empire built on conquest and an empire built through trade, developed into a stereotype still shared by most historians today. Curiously, this opposition defined the main lines of the European expansion in Asia until the eighteenth century. Even inside the Portuguese Empire, Albuquerque was accused of favouring expensive territorial conquest against Almeida's preference for trade monopolies and maritime dominion. The Dutch and English companies in Asia subsequently came to terms with this opposition, which reappeared in most of their expansion processes. Spanish ability to conquer and colonise, contrasted with Portuguese ability to trade and control ports, became a persistent topos of an essentialist approach that ignores such historical realities as Spanish failure to conquer either the Spice Islands or Indochina by the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, not to mention Portuguese control of most of Ceylon between 1590 and 1630 or especially the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil. This topos resulted from a Eurocentric point of view whereby any conquest or colonisation depended on the capacity (or 'nature') of the European power, regardless of local conditions and local capacities for resistance.

[87] *Crónicas del Gran Capitán*, ed. Antonio Rodriguez Villa (Madrid: Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1908); José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec, *El Gran Capitán: retrato de una época* (Barcelona: Península, 2002).

Albuquerque and Cortés also shared similarly 'realistic' perspectives in their letters. Both adopted a totally different approach from previous reports, in which a marvellous vision of the world still influenced descriptions of distant countries. The letters by Columbus and Vespucci about the western Atlantic, and Duarte Pacheco Pereira's long description of the coast of Africa,[88] all blended accurate observations with a mythological framework that shaped late medieval European visions of the world. Although Cortés was apparently touched by the messianic Franciscans' vision of the expansion, his letters to Charles V reveal no visionary framework. Equally, he was aware of local mythology but used it for political purposes. Moreover, he distorted the narrative of his reception outside Tenochtitlán and invented Montezuma's speeches to justify the legitimacy of his actions as a *conquistador*, arguing that Charles V's suzerainty had been recognised by the local ruler but broken by his subjects. 'Just politics', as would be said nowadays.

Albuquerque produced the first serious European description of the Red Sea and gave extremely accurate reports on the Asian powers in the Persian Gulf, South Asia and South-east Asia. His references to a possible conquest of Jeddah in order to destroy the Muslim centre of worship in Mecca, or to invade Sinai in order to conquer Jerusalem, have been mistakenly interpreted as signs of millenarianism, in line with the exclusively religious justification for Portuguese expansion developed from the 1930s to the 1960s by Portuguese historians influenced by a fascist regime.[89] I have also criticised the confusion between messianic vision, millenarianism and crusading spirit, which were all quite different cultural configurations. In Albuquerque's case, there are explicit references to a crusading spirit, with no trace of messianic vision or millenarianism. But even his 'crusading' rhetoric had clear

[88] Christopher Columbus, *Textos*; Amerigo Vespucci, *Il Mondo Nuovo*, ed. Mario Pozzi, 2nd edition (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1993); Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de situ orbis*, ed. Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991).

[89] For my refutation of this ideological interpretation, see Francisco Bethencourt, 'Le millénarisme: idéologie de l'impérialisme eurasiatique?', *Annales HSEE* (2002), pp. 189–94.

political purposes, as becomes obvious if his references are contextualised and his actions analysed; all of them seem extremely realistic and carefully prepared. Albuquerque targeted a small fraction of the Portuguese royal court open to the idea of a crusade, such as his friend Duarte Galvão; he wanted to exploit the pope's explicit support for Portuguese expansion and mobilise the religious argument to make his conquests in India seem unchallengeable at the royal court. In fact, after Albuquerque it became impossible to recycle the old enchanted vision of the world. The first accurate descriptions of the coasts of East Africa and Asia were made under Albuquerque's direct or indirect influence between 1513 and 1515 by Tomé Pires and Duarte Barbosa.[90]

The correspondence of both Albuquerque and Cortés reveals their ambition to be portrayed as heroes. Their letters include implicit references to classic examples of European conquerors like Alexander or Caesar, against whom they wished to be measured. Propaganda formed part of both men's strategy to obtain political support, but both captains also emphasised the exceptional nature of their completed actions to reinforce their fame and future reputation. Directly or indirectly, their correspondence influenced every chronicle and history of New Spain and Portuguese India. What is now contested as 'Prescott's paradigm'[91] is simply the narrative elaborated by Cortés, who enjoyed enormous fame during his lifetime: Pedro Mártir de Anglería followed his letters in the book *De Orbe Novo*, composing a flattering image of Cortés while reserving the name Caesar for Charles V.[92] This limit was obvious; Charles V had his own propaganda programme, mixing texts and images, also designed to portray

[90] *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, ed. Armando Cortesão (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944); *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, ed. Mansel Longworth Dames (London: Hakluyt Society, 1918–21); *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, ed. Maria Augusta da Veiga e Sousa, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1996–2000). Even though Duarte Barbosa was Albuquerque's adversary, they shared the same intellectual atmosphere.

[91] William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico and History of the Conquest of Peru* (New York: The Modern Library, 1936).

[92] Pedro Mártir de Anglería, *Decadas del Nuevo Mundo*, ed. Ramón Alba (Madrid: Polifemo, 1989).

him as a hero.[93] In contrast, Lucio Marineo Siculo exceeded the limit in his *Cosas memorables de España*, published in 1530,[94] by stating that Cortés deserved the title of king, comparing the *conquistador* to Hercules, Alexander, Jason and Caesar and asserting that he had brought more sheep to Christ than the Apostles. Needless to say, the book was prohibited. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo similarly accepted the essential aspects of Cortés's narrative, considering the conquest of Mexico more difficult than the conquests of Caesar.[95]

Besides influencing the main chroniclers during his lifetime, Cortés also commissioned his chaplain, Francisco López de Gómara, to write a biography.[96] Cortés's last years in Spain, between 1540 and 1547, when he participated in court life and the failed expedition to reconquer Algiers, were not simply a period of judicial unrest. Rather, he organised an intellectual circle including the papal nuncio, Cardinal Poggio; the Archbishop of Cagliari, Domenico Pastorelli; Bernardino Peralta; Antonio Peralta, Marquis of Falces (whose son became the third Viceroy of Mexico); and Pedro de Navarra.[97] Ninety years after Cortés's death, Baltasar Gracián attributed to him the qualities of a king and placed him among the highest heroes: 'the prodigious Marquis del Valle, don Fernando Cortés . . . made a triad with Alexander and Caesar, sharing between them the conquest of the world through different parts'.[98]

The impact of Cortés can also be measured outside Spain. Paolo Giovio included him among the gallery of portraits created in his palace at Como in 1539, later publishing the corresponding text in his

[93] Fernando Checa Cremades, *Carlos V y la imagen del heróe en el Renacimiento* (Madrid: Taurus, 1987).

[94] Lucio Marineo Siculo, *De las cosas memorables de Espana* (Alcalá de Henares, 1530), reproduced by Miguel León-Portilla in *Historia 16* (April 1985).

[95] Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *História general y natural de las Indias*, ed. Amador de los Rios, vol. 3 (Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia de la Historia, 1853), p. 360 (bk. 33, ch. 20).

[96] Francisco López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, ed. José Luiz de Rojas (Madrid: Historia 16, 1987).

[97] Salvador de Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés, Conqueror of Mexico*, 2nd edition (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954), p. 482.

[98] Baltasar Gracián, *El Heroe* (1st edition 1637) (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1980), ch. IX (entitled *Del quilate rey*, meaning 'king's carat' or 'excellence'), p. 26.

book of eulogies that first focused on writers (1546) and later extended to military men (1551).[99] In one of his letters to Cosimo de' Medici from 1549, Giovio stated that he had collected portraits of famous men for thirty years. When he died in 1552, this seminal work (the first *Who's Who* combining portraits with texts) contained 146 eulogies of writers and 134 eulogies of kings and military men, but only three eulogies of artists, because Giovio had invited his friend Vasari to write the biographies of important artists. The only Portuguese in his gallery was Tristão da Cunha, an important captain in India but neither a governor nor a major conqueror; he had made his reputation in Europe as King Manuel's ambassador to the pope in 1514, staging an exotic entry into Rome replete with an elephant, wild animals and representatives of different people from all over the world.[100]

In 1584, the French royal cosmographer André Thevet published a volume of portraits of famous men, the only sixteenth-century work rivalling Giovio's. Thevet's book encompassed the world, because the author was a former traveller to America. His 232 biographies incorporated for the first time the lives of six native American rulers, including Montezuma and Atahualpa, whose states Thevet considered comparable to European societies. Hernán Cortés and Afonso de Albuquerque also appear as the founders of the two Iberian empires; their portraits and the descriptions of their actions were taken respectively from López de Gómara and Jerónimo Osório. While Cortés is portrayed with his coat of arms and a sword, making a gesture of command with his right hand, Albuquerque is portrayed with a sword and a compass, underlining his scientific knowledge.[101] Both *conquistadores*

[99] Paolo Giovio, *Gli elogi degli uomini illustri (letterati, artisti, uomini d'arme)*, ed. Renzo Meregazzi (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1972), pp. 467–71. Copies from Giovio's collection of portraits were commissioned by Marchioness Isabella Gonzaga d'Este, Duke Cosimo de' Medici (now at the Uffizi), Archduke Ferdinand of Habsburg and Cardinal Federico Borromeo.

[100] Paolo Giovio, *Elogi*, pp. 394–6. For several reports of this event by different ambassadors and humanists in Rome, see Banha de Andrade, *Mundos novos*, pp. 660–5.

[101] André Thevet, *Les vrais portraits et vies des homes illustres*, 2 vols. (Paris: N. Chesneau, 1584). See the English version, *Portraits from the Age of Exploration: Selections from André Thevet's 'Les vrais portraits et vies des homes illustres'*, ed. Roger Schlesinger, trans. by Edward Benson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 36–61.

were known for their bold speech and blunt talk. Giovanni Botero recorded different stories and sayings, mainly by Albuquerque.[102] The reputation of their spontaneity inspired several authors through to the eighteenth century; for example, Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs* used a traditional story of a clash between Cortés and Charles V to elaborate on the ungratefulness of kings.[103]

Albuquerque's reputation was not truly established until the 1550s and 1560s, through the first chronicles of the Portuguese in Asia by João de Barros and Fernão Lopes de Castanheda,[104] the biography written by his son Brás de Albuquerque, and the chronicles of King Manuel by Damião de Góis and Osório,[105] who was the first to portray Albuquerque as a model of the virtues, the best general in war and the wisest politician in public administration, topics later developed by Pedro de Mariz. Luís de Camões's epic poem *The Lusiads*, published in 1572 to celebrate the Portuguese 'nation' and its expansion in Asia, focused mainly on the deeds of Vasco da Gama. Camões identified two captains, Duarte Pacheco Pereira (whom he compared to Achilles) and Afonso de Albuquerque, but criticised the latter for being too severe in punishing his soldiers.[106]

In 1591, the first statue of Albuquerque was erected in Goa, at the chapel where he had been buried, by order of Governor Matias de Albuquerque, a collateral descendant of his family. The first printed history of Portugal, published significantly in 1594 after the

[102] Giovanni Botero, *Detti memorabili di personaggi illustri* (Venice: Francesco Balzetta, 1610), fols. 23r, 54r, 68r, 74v–75r, 76v.

[103] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits d'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII*, ed. René Pomeau, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1963), vol. 2, p. 353 (ch. 97): 'Enfin, malgré les titres dont Cortez fut décoré par sa patrie, il y fut peu considéré. A peine peut-il obtenir audience de Charles V: un jour il fendit la presse qui entourait le coche de l'empereur, et monta sur l'étrier de la portière. Charles demanda quel était cet homme. C'est, répondit Cortez, celui qui vous a donné plus d'Etats que vos pères ne vous ont laissé des villes.'

[104] Barros, *Ásia*, vol. 2; Lopes de Castanheda, *História do descobrimento*, vol. 1, bks. II–III.

[105] Brás de Albuquerque, *Commentaries*; Góis, *Chrónica*, pt. II, chs. 31–7, 43; pt. III, chs. 10–11, 16–22, 25–6, 28–30, 43–8, 80; Osório, *De rebus Emmanuelis*, bks. V–X.

[106] Luís de Camões, *The Lusiads*, trans. and ed. Landeg White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), canto X, verses 40–5.

unification of the Iberian crowns under Philip II, compared Albuquerque to Alexander and Nestor in terms of force and wisdom, because 'he administrated the war as supreme emperor and governed the republic as the most perfect magistrate'.[107] This signalled Albuquerque's final consecration, establishing his leading position in the pantheon of Portuguese heroes, a position elevated still further during the crucial period of nation-building in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[107] Pedro Mariz, *Diálogos de vária história* (Coimbra: António de Mariz, 1594), dialogue IV, ch. 17.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

VOLUME III

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